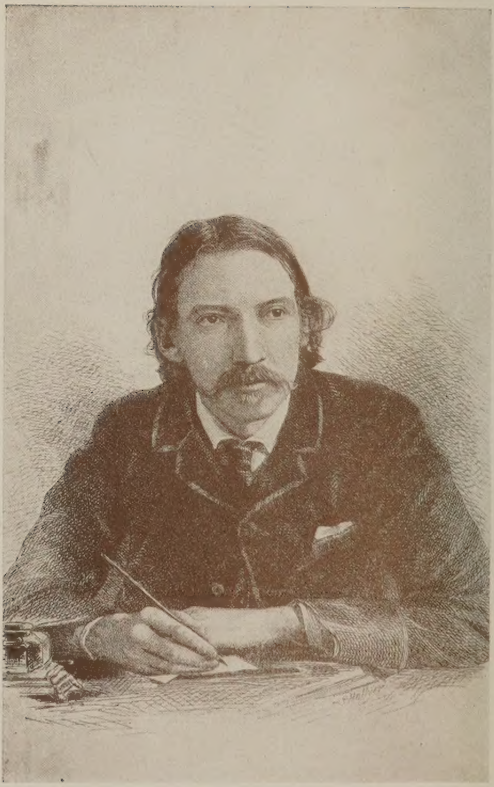
THE POCKET UNIVERSITY



ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

THE
POCKET UNIVERSITY

VOLUME XX PART I

FICTION

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PREFACE

There is a book called "What Literature Can Do for Me" by C. Alphonso Smith which was written for those who wish to relate the masterpieces of literature to the problems and pleasures of their daily life. The book is divided into six chapters, and the chapters are all by a man who believes with Huxley and with Dr. Egan and indeed with nearly everyone who has given thought enough to the subject to know what he believes that "the great end of life is not knowledge but action."

These are the chapter titles:

I. It can give you an outlet
II. It can keep before you the vision of the ideal
III. It can give you a better knowledge of human nature
IV. It can restore the past to you
V. It can show you the glory of the commonplace
VI. It can give you the mastery of your own language.

Literature, Dr. Smith believes, is within you. The masters only bring it out, and in doing so they work through the various channels indicated above. The ideal which they hold before you is not a social nor a political nor an industrial nor a

spiritual nor any other kind of special ideal, but something that is bigger than all of them, big enough to include them all—an ideal of completeness, of completeness based on culture, on the kind of culture which means, as it meant for Matthew Arnold, "the study of perfection," and on artistic beauty of the sort that comes when the word "artistic" has no connection with doing things in the most unusual or the most startling way, but simply with doing them in the best way.

CONTENTS

PAGE

"The Courting of T'Nowhead's Bell,"
By James Matthew Barrie 1

"The Outcasts of Poker Flat,"
By Francis Bret Harte 30

"The Attack on the Mill,"
By Émile Zola 47

"Markheim,"
By Robert Louis Stevenson 103

"L'Arrabiata,"
By Johann Ludwig Paul Heyse . . . 130

THE COURTING OF T'NOWHEAD'S BELL

BY

JAMES MATTHEW BARRIE

FOR two years it had been notorious in the square that Sam'l Dickie was thinking of courting T'nowhead's Bell, and that if little Sanders Elshioner (which is the Thrums pronunciation of Alexander Alexander) went in for her he might prove a formidable rival. Sam'l was a weaver in the Tenements, and Sanders a coal-carter whose trade-mark was a bell on his horse's neck that told when coals were coming. Being something of a public man, Sanders had not perhaps so high a social position as Sam'l, but he had succeeded his father on the coal-cart, while the weaver had already tried several trades. It had always been against Sam'l, too, that once when the kirk was vacant he had advised the selection of the third minister who preached for it on the ground that it came expensive to pay a large number of candidates. The scandal of the thing was hushed up, out of respect for his father, who was a God-fearing man, but Sam'l was known by it in Lang Tammas' circle. The coal-carter was called Little Sanders to distinguish him from his father, who

was not much more than half his size. He had grown up with the name, and its inapplicability now came home to nobody. Sam'l's mother had been more far-seeing than Sanders'. Her man had been called Sammy all his life because it was the name he got as a boy, so when their eldest son was born she spoke of him as Sam'l while still in his cradle. The neighbours imitated her, and thus the young man had a better start in life than had been granted to Sammy, his father.

It was Saturday evening—the night in the week when Auld Licht young men fell in love. Sam'l Dickie, wearing a blue glengarry bonnet with a red ball on the top, came to the door of a one-story house in the Tenements and stood there wriggling, for he was in a suit of tweeds for the first time that week, and did not feel at one with them. When his feeling of being a stranger to himself wore off, he looked up and down the road, which straggles between houses and gardens, and then, picking his way over the puddles, crossed to his father's henhouse and sat down on it. He was now on his way to the square.

Eppie Fargus was sitting on an adjoining dike knitting stockings, and Sam'l looked at her for a time.

"Is't yersel, Eppie?" he said at last.

"It's a' that," said Eppie.

"Hoo's a' wi' ye?" asked Sam'l.

"We're juist aff an' on," replied Eppie cautiously.

There was not much more to say, but as Sam'l sidled off the henhouse he murmured politely, "Ay, ay." In another minute he would have been fairly started, but Eppie resumed the conversation.

"Sam'l," she said, with a twinkle in her eye, "ye can tell Lisbeth Fargus I'll likely be drappin' in on her aboot Munday or Teisday."

Lisbeth was sister to Eppie, and wife of Tammas McQuhatty, better known as T'nowhead, which was the name of his farm. She was thus Bell's mistress.

Sam'l leaned against the henhouse as if all his desire to depart had gone.

"Hoo d'ye kin I'll be at the T'nowhead the nicht?" he asked, grinning in anticipation.

"Ou, I'se warrant ye'll be after Bell," said Eppie.

"Am no sae sure o' that," said Sam'l, trying to leer. He was enjoying himself now.

"Am no sure o' that," he repeated, for Eppie seemed lost in stitches.

"Sam'l?"

"Ay."

"Ye'll be spierin' her sune noo, I dinna doot?"

This took Sam'l, who had only been courting Bell for a year or two, a little aback.

"Hoo d'ye mean, Eppie?" he asked.

"Maybe ye'll do't the nicht."

"Na, there's nae hurry," said Sam'l.

"Weel, we're a' coontin' on't, Sam'l."

"Gae wa wi' ye."

"What for no?"

"Gae wa wi' ye," said Sam'l again.

"Bell's gie an' fond o' ye, Sam'l."

"Ay," said Sam'l.

"But am dootin' ye're a fell billy wi' the lasses."

"Ay, oh, I d'na kin, moderate, moderate," said Sam'l, in high delight.

"I saw ye," said Eppie, speaking with a wire in her mouth, "gaein' on terr'ble wi' Mysy Haggart at the pump last Saturday."

"We was juist amoosin' oorsels," said Sam'l.

"It'll be nae amoosement to Mysy," said Eppie, "gin ye brak her heart."

"Losh, Eppie," said Sam'l, "I didna think o' that."

"Ye maun kin weel, Sam'l, 'at there's mony a lass wid jump at ye."

"Ou, weel," said Sam'l, implying that a man must take these things as they come.

"For ye're a dainty chield to look at, Sam'l."

"Do ye think so, Eppie? Ay, ay; oh, I d'na kin am onything by the ordinar."

"Ye mayna be," said Eppie, "but lasses doesna do to be ower partikler."

Sam'l resented this, and prepared to depart again.

"Ye'll no tell Bell that?" he asked anxiously.

"Tell her what?"

"Aboot me an' Mysy."

"We'll see hoo ye behave yersel, Sam'l."

"No 'at I care, Eppie; ye can tell her gin ye like. I widna think twice o' tellin' her mysel."

"The Lord forgie ye for leein', Sam'l," said Eppie, as he disappeared down Tammy Tosh's close. Here he came upon Henders Webster.

"Ye're late, Sam'l," said Henders.

"What for?"

"Ou, I was thinkin' ye wid be gaen the length o' T'nowhead the nicht, an' I saw Sanders Elshioner makkin's wy there an oor syne."

"Did ye?" cried Sam'l, adding craftily, "but it's naething to me."

"Tod, lad," said Henders, "gin ye dinna buckle to, Sanders 'll be carryin' her off."

Sam'l flung back his head and passed on.

"Sam'l!" cried Henders after him.

"Ay," said Sam'l, wheeling round.

"Gie Bell a kiss frae me."

The full force of this joke struck neither all at once. Sam'l began to smile at it as he turned down the school-wynd, and it came upon Henders while he was in his garden feeding his ferret. Then he slapped his legs gleefully, and explained the conceit to Will'um Byars, who went into the house and thought it over.

There were twelve or twenty little groups of men in the square, which was lit by a flare of oil suspended over a cadger's cart. Now and again a staid young woman passed through the square with a basket on her arm, and if she had lingered long enough to give them time, some of

the idlers would have addressed her. As it was, they gazed after her, and then grinned to each other.

"Ay, Sam'l," said two or three young men, as Sam'l joined them beneath the town clock.

"Ay, Davit," replied Sam'l.

This group was composed of some of the sharpest wits in Thrums, and it was not to be expected that they would let this opportunity pass. Perhaps when Sam'l joined them he knew what was in store for him.

"Was ye lookin' for T'nowhead's Bell, Sam'l?" asked one.

"Or mebbe ye was wantin' the minister?" suggested another, the same who had walked out twice with Christy Duff and not married her after all.

Sam'l could not think of a good reply at the moment, so he laughed good-naturedly.

"Ondoobtedly she's a snod bit crittur," said Davit archly.

"An' michty clever wi' her fingers," added Jamie Deuchars.

"Man, I've thocht o' makkin' up to Bell mysel," said Peter Ogle. "Wid there be ony chance, think ye, Sam'l?"

"I'm thinkin' she widna hae ye for her first, Pete," replied Sam'l, in one of those happy flashes that come to some men, "but there's nae sayin' but what she micht tak ye to finish up wi'."

The unexpectedness of this sally startled every-

one. Though Sam'l did not set up for a wit, however, like Davit, it was notorious that he could say a cutting thing once in a way.

"Did ye ever see Bell reddin' up?" asked Pete, recovering from his overthrow. He was a man who bore no malice.

"It's a sicht," said Sam'l solemnly.

"Hoo will that be?" asked Jamie Deuchars.

"It's weel worth yer while," said Pete, "to ging atower to the T'nowhead an' see. Ye'll mind the closed-in beds i' the kitchen? Ay, weel, they're a fell spoilt crew, T'nowhead's litlins, an' no that aisy to manage. Th' ither lasses Lisbeth's hae'n had a michty trouble wi' them. When they war i' the middle o' their reddin up the bairns wid come tumlin' about the floor, but, sal, I assure ye, Bell didna fash lang wi' them. Did she, Sam'l?"

"She did not," said Sam'l, dropping into a fine mode of speech to add emphasis to his remark.

"I'll tell ye what she did," said Pete to the others. "She juist lifted up the litlins, twa at a time, an' flung them into the coffin-beds. Syne she snibbit the doors on them, an' keepit them there till the floor was dry."

"Ay, man, did she so?" said Davit admiringly.

"I've seen her do't mysel," said Sam'l.

"There's no a lassie maks better bannocks this side o' Fetter Lums," continued Pete.

"Her mither tocht her that," said Sam'l;

"she was a gran' han' at the bakin', Kitty Ogilvy."

"I've heard say," remarked Jamie, putting it this way, so as not to tie himself down to anything, "'at Bell's scones is equal to Mag Lunan's."

"So they are," said Sam'l, almost fiercely.

"I kin she's a neat han' at singein' a hen," said Pete.

"An' wi't a'," said Davit, "she's a snod, canty bit stocky in her Sabbath claes."

"If onything, thick in the waist," suggested Jamie.

"I dinna see that," said Sam'l.

"I d'na care for her hair either," continued Jamie, who was very nice in his tastes; "something mair yallowchy wid be an improvement."

"A'body kins," growled Sam'l, "'at black hair's the bonniest."

The others chuckled.

"Puir Sam'l!" Pete said.

Sam'l not being certain whether this should be received with a smile or a frown, opened his mouth wide as a kind of compromise. This was position one with him for thinking things over.

Few Auld Lichts, as I have said, went the length of choosing a helpmate for themselves. One day a young man's friends would see him mending the washing-tub of a maiden's mother. They kept the joke until Saturday night, and then he learned from them what he had been

after. It dazed him for a time, but in a year or so he grew accustomed to the idea, and they were then married. With a little help he fell in love just like other people.

Sam'l was going the way of the others, but he found it difficult to come to the point. He only went courting once a week, and he could never take up the running at the place where he left off the Saturday before. Thus he had not, so far, made great headway. His method of making up to Bell had been to drop in at T'nowhead on Saturday nights and talk with the farmer about the rinderpest.

The farm kitchen was Bell's testimonial. Its chairs, tables, and stools were scoured by her to the whiteness of Bob Angus's sawmill boards, and the muslin blind on the window was starched like a child's pinafore. Bell was brave, too, as well as energetic. Once Thrums had been overrun with thieves. It is now thought that there may have been only one, but he had the wicked cleverness of a gang. Such was his repute that there were weavers who spoke of locking their doors when they went from home. He was not very skilful, however, being generally caught, and when they said they knew he was a robber he gave them their things back and went away. If they had given him time, there is no doubt that he would have gone off with his plunder. One night he went to T'nowhead, and Bell, who slept in the kitchen, was awakened by the noise. She knew who it would be, so she rose and

dressed herself, and went to look for him with a candle. The thief had not known what to do when he got in, and as it was very lonely he was glad to see Bell. She told him he ought to be ashamed of himself, and would not let him out by the door until he had taken off his boots so as not to soil the carpet.

On this Saturday evening, Sam'l stood his ground in the square, until by and by he found himself alone. There were other groups there still, but his circle had melted away. They went separately, and no one said good-night. Each took himself off slowly, backing out of the group until he was fairly started.

Sam'l looked about him, and then, seeing that the others had gone, walked round the townhouse into the darkness of the brae that leads down and then up to the farm of T'now head.

To get into the good graces of Lisbeth Fargus you had to know her ways and humour them. Sam'l, who was a student of women, knew this, and so, instead of pushing the door open and walking in, he went through the rather ridiculous ceremony of knocking. Sanders Elshioner was also aware of this weakness of Lisbeth's, but, though he often made up his mind to knock, the absurdity of the thing prevented his doing so when he reached the door. T'nowhead himself had never got used to his wife's refined notions, and when any one knocked he always

started to his feet, thinking there must be something wrong.

Lisbeth came to the door, her expansive figure blocking the way in.

"Sam'l," she said.

"Lisbeth," said Sam'l.

He shook hands with the farmer's wife, knowing that she liked it, but only said "Ay, Bell" to his sweetheart, "Ay, T'nowhead" to McQuhatty, and "It's yersel, Sanders," to his rival.

They were all sitting round the fire, T'nowhead, with his feet on the ribs, wondering why he felt so warm, and Bell darned a stocking, while Lisbeth kept an eye on a goblet full of potatoes.

"Sit into the fire, Sam'l," said the farmer, not, however, making way for him.

"Na, na," said Sam'l, "I'm to bide nae time." Then he sat into the fire. His face was turned away from Bell, and when she spoke he answered her without looking round. Sam'l felt a little anxious. Sanders Elshioner, who had one leg shorter than the other, but looked well when sitting, seemed suspiciously at home. He asked Bell questions out of his own head, which was beyond Sam'l, and once he said something to her in such a low voice that the others could not catch it. T'nowhead asked curiously what it was, and Sanders explained that he had only said, "Ay, Bell, the morn's the Sabbath." There was nothing startling in this, but Sam'l

did not like it. He began to wonder if he was too late, and, had he seen his opportunity, would have told Bell of a nasty rumour that Sanders intended to go over to the Free Church if they would make him kirk-officer.

Sam'l had the good-will of T'nowhead's wife, who liked a polite man. Sanders did his best, but from want of practice he constantly made mistakes. To-night, for instance, he wore his hat in the house because he did not like to put up his hand and take it off. T'nowhead had not taken his off either, but that was because he meant to go out by and by and lock the byre door. It was impossible to say which of her lovers Bell preferred. The proper course with an Auld Licht lassie was to prefer the man who proposed to her.

"Ye'll bide a wee, an' hae something to eat?" Lisbeth asked Sam'l, with her eyes on the goblet.

"No, I thank ye," said Sam'l, with true gentility.

"Ye'll better?"

"I dinna think it."

"Hoots aye; what's to hender ye?"

"Weel, since ye're sae pressin', I'll bide."

No one asked Sanders to stay. Bell could not, for she was but the servant, and T'nowhead knew that the kick his wife had given him meant that he was not to do so either. Sanders whistled to show that he was not uncomfortable.

"Ay, then, I'll be stappin' ower the brae," he said at last.

He did not go, however. There was sufficient pride in him to get him off his chair, but only slowly, for he had to get accustomed to the notion of going. At intervals of two or three minutes he remarked that he must now be going. In the same circumstances Sam'l would have acted similarly. For a Thrums man it is one of the hardest things in life to get away from anywhere.

At last Lisbeth saw that something must be done. The potatoes were burning, and T'nowhead had an invitation on his tongue.

"Yes, I'll hae to be movin'," said Sanders hopelessly, for the fifth time.

"Guid nicht to ye, then, Sanders," said Lisbeth. "Gie the door a fling-to, ahent ye."

Sanders, with a mighty effort, pulled himself together. He looked boldly at Bell, and then took off his hat carefully. Sam'l saw with misgivings that there was something in it which was not a handkerchief. It was a paper bag glittering with gold braid, and contained such an assortment of sweets as lads bought for their lasses on the Muckle Friday.

"Hae, Bell," said Sanders, handing the bag to Bell in an off-hand way as if it were but a trifle. Nevertheless, he was a little excited, for he went off without saying good-night.

No one spoke. Bell's face was crimson. T'nowhead fidgeted on his chair, and Lisbeth looked at Sam'l. The weaver was strangely

calm and collected, though he would have liked to know whether this was a proposal.

"Sit in by to the table, Sam'l," said Lisbeth, trying to look as if things were as they had been before.

She put a saucerful of butter, salt, and pepper near the fire to melt, for melted butter is the shoeing-horn that helps over a meal of potatoes. Sam'l, however, saw what the hour required, and jumping up, he seized his bonnet.

"Hing the tatties higher up the joist, Lisbeth," he said with dignity; "I'se be back in ten meenits."

He hurried out of the house, leaving the others looking at each other.

"What do ye think?" asked Lisbeth.

"I d'na kin," faltered Bell.

"Thae tatties is lang o' comin' to the boil," said T'nowhead.

In some circles a lover who behaved like Sam'l would have been suspected of intent upon his rival's life, but neither Bell nor Lisbeth did the weaver that injustice. In a case of this kind it did not much matter what T'nowhead thought.

The ten minutes had barely passed when Sam'l was back in the farm kitchen. He was too flurried to knock this time, and, indeed, Lisbeth did not expect it of him.

"Bell, hae!" he cried, handing his sweetheart a tinsel bag twice the size of Sanders' gift.

"Losh preserve's!" exclaimed Lisbeth; "I'se warrant there's a shillin's worth."

"There's a' that, Lisbeth—an' mair," said Sam'l firmly.

"I thank ye, Sam'l," said Bell, feeling an unwonted elation as she gazed at the two paper bags in her lap.

"Ye're ower extravegint, Sam'l," Lisbeth said.

"Not at all," said Sam'l; "not at all. But I widna advise ye to eat thae ither anes, Bell—they're second quality."

Bell drew back a step from Sam'l.

"How do ye kin?" asked the farmer shortly, for he liked Sanders.

"I spiered i' the shop," said Sam'l.

The goblet was placed on a broken plate on the table with the saucer beside it, and Sam'l, like the others, helped himself. What he did was to take potatoes from the pot with his fingers, peel off their coats, and then dip them into the butter. Lisbeth would have liked to provide knives and forks, but she knew that beyond a certain point T'nowhead was master in his own house. As for Sam'l, he felt victory in his hands, and began to think that he had gone too far.

In the meantime, Sanders, little witting that Sam'l had trumped his trick, was sauntering along the kirk-wynd with his hat on the side of his head. Fortunately, he did not meet the minister.

The courting of T'nowhead's Bell reached its crisis one Sabbath about a month after the events above recorded. The minister was in

great force that day, but it is no part of mine to tell how he bore himself. I was there, and am not likely to forget the scene. It was a fateful Sabbath for T'nowhead's Bell and her swains, and destined to be remembered for the painful scandal which they perpetrated in their passion.

Bell was not in the kirk. There being an infant of six months in the house, it was a question of either Lisbeth or the lassie's staying at home with him, and though Lisbeth was unselfish in a general way, she could not resist the delight of going to church. She had nine children besides the baby, and being but a woman, it was the pride of her life to march them into the T'nowhead pew, so well watched that they dared not misbehave, and so tightly packed that they could not fall. The congregation looked at that pew, the mothers enviously, when they sang the lines:

"Jerusalem like a city is
Compactly built together."

The first half of the service had been gone through on this particular Sunday without anything remarkable happening. It was at the end of the psalm which preceded the sermon that Sanders Elshioner, who sat near the door, lowered his head until it was no higher than the pews, and in that attitude, looking almost like a four-footed animal, slipped out of the church. In their eagerness to be at the sermon many of the congregation did not notice him, and those

who did put the matter by in their minds for future investigation. Sam'l, however, could not take it so coolly. From his seat in the gallery he saw Sanders disappear, and his mind misgave him. With the true lover's instinct he understood it all. Sanders had been struck by the fine turn-out in the T'nowhead pew. Bell was alone at the farm. What an opportunity to work one's way up to a proposal! T'nowhead was so overrun with children that such a chance seldom occurred, except on a Sabbath. Sanders, doubtless, was off to propose, and he, Sam'l, was left behind.

The suspense was terrible. Sam'l and Sanders had both known all along that Bell would take the first of the two who asked her. Even those who thought her proud admitted that she was modest. Bitterly the weaver repented having waited so long. Now it was too late. In ten minutes Sanders would be at T'nowhead; in an hour all would be over. Sam'l rose to his feet in a daze. His mother pulled him down by the coat-tail, and his father shook him, thinking he was walking in his sleep. He tottered past them, however, hurried up the aisle, which was so narrow that Dan'l Ross could only reach his seat by walking sideways, and was gone before the minister could do more than stop in the middle of a whirl and gape in horror after him.

A number of the congregation felt that day the advantage of sitting in the loft. What was a mystery to those downstairs was revealed to

them. From the gallery windows they had a fine open view to the south; and as Sam'l took the common, which was a short cut though a steep ascent to T'nowhead, he was never out of their line of vision. Sanders was not to be seen, but they guessed rightly the reason why. Thinking he had ample time, he had gone round by the main road to save his boots—perhaps a little scared by what was coming. Sam'l's design was to forestall him by taking the shorter path over the burn and up the common.

It was a race for a wife, and several onlookers in the gallery braved the minister's displeasure to see who won. Those who favoured Sam'l's suit exultingly saw him leap the stream, while the friends of Sanders fixed their eyes on the top of the common where it ran into the road. Sanders must come into sight there, and the one who reached this point first would get Bell.

As Auld Lichts do not walk abroad on the Sabbath, Sanders would probably not be delayed. The chances were in his favour. Had it been any other day in the week Sam'l might have run. So some of the congregation in the gallery were thinking, when suddenly they saw him bend low and then take to his heels. He had caught sight of Sanders's head bodding over the hedge that separated the road from the common, and feared that Sanders might see him. The members of the congregation who could crane their necks sufficiently saw a black object, which they guessed to be the carter's hat, crawl-

ing along the hedge-top. For a moment it was motionless, and then it shot ahead. The rivals had seen each other. It was now a hot race. Sam'l, dissembling no longer, clattered up the common, becoming smaller and smaller to the onlookers as he neared the top. More than one person in the gallery almost rose to their feet in their excitement. Sam'l had it. No, Sanders was in front. Then the two figures disappeared from view. They seemed to run into each other at the top of the brae, and no one could say who was first. The congregation looked at one another. Some of them perspired. But the minister held on his course.

Sam'l had just been in time to cut Sanders out. It was the weaver's saving that Sanders saw this when his rival turned the corner; for Sam'l was sadly blown. Sanders took in the situation and gave in at once. The last hundred yards of the distance he covered at his leisure, and when he arrived at his destination he did not go in. It was a fine afternoon for the time of year, and he went round to have a look at the pig, about which T'nowhead was a little sinfully puffed up.

"Ay," said Sanders, digging his fingers critically into the grunting animal; "quite so."

"Grumph," said the pig, getting reluctantly to his feet.

"Ou, ay; yes," said Sanders, thoughtfully.

Then he sat down on the edge of the sty, and looked long and silently at an empty bucket.

But whether his thoughts were of T'nowhead's Bell, whom he had lost forever, or of the food the farmer fed his pig on, is not known.

"Lord preserve's! Are ye no at the kirk?" cried Bell, nearly dropping the baby as Sam'l broke into the room.

"Bell!" cried Sam'l.

Then T'nowhead Bell knew that her hour had come.

"Sam'l," she faltered.

"Will ye hae's, Bell?" demanded Sam'l, glaring at her sheepishly.

"Ay," answered Bell.

Sam'l fell into a chair.

"Bring's a drink o' water, Bell," he said.

But Bell thought the occasion required milk, and there was none in the kitchen. She went out to the byre, still with the baby in her arms, and saw Sanders Elshioner sitting gloomily on the pigsty.

"Weel, Bell," said Sanders.

"I thocht ye'd been at the kirk, Sanders," said Bell.

Then there was a silence between them.

"Has Sam'l spiered ye, Bell?" asked Sanders, stolidly.

"Ay," said Bell again, and this time there was a tear in her eye. Sanders was little better than an "orra man," and Sam'l was a weaver, and yet—— But it was too late now. Sanders gave the pig a vicious poke with a stick, and when it had ceased to grunt Bell was back in

the kitchen. She had forgotten about the milk, however, and Sam'l only got water after all.

In after days, when the story of Bell's wooing was told, there were some who held that the circumstances would have almost justified the lassie in giving Sam'l the go-by. But these perhaps forgot that her other lover was in the same predicament as the accepted one—that of the two, indeed, he was the more to blame, for he set off to T'nowhead on the Sabbath of his own accord, while Sam'l only ran after him. And then there is no one to say for certain whether Bell heard of her suitors' delinquencies until Lisbeth's return from the kirk. Sam'l could never remember whether he told her, and Bell was not sure whether, if he did, she took it in. Sanders was greatly in demand for weeks after to tell what he knew of the affair, but though he was twice asked to tea to the manse among the trees, and subjected thereafter to ministerial cross-examinations, this is all he told. He remained at the pigsty until Sam'l left the farm, when he joined him at the top of the brae, and they went home together.

"It's yersel, Sanders," said Sam'l.

"It is so, Sam'l," said Sanders.

"Very cauld," said Sam'l.

"Blawy," assented Sanders.

After a pause:

"Sam'l," said Sanders.

"Ay."

"I'm hearin' yer to be mairit."

"Ay."

"Weel, Sam'l, she's a snod bit lassie."

"Thank ye," said Sam'l.

"I had ance a kin' o' notion o' Bell mysel," continued Sanders.

"Ye had?"

"Yes, Sam'l; but I thocht better o't."

"Hoo d'ye mean?" asked Sam'l, a little anxiously.

"Weel, Sam'l, mairitch is a terrible responsibeelity."

"It is so," said Sam'l, wincing.

"An' no the thing to tak up withoot conseederation."

"But it's a blessed and honourable state, Sanders; ye've heard the minister on't."

"They say," continued the relentless Sanders, "'at the minister doesna get on sair wi' the wife himsel."

"So they do," cried Sam'l, with a sinking at the heart.

"I've been telt," Sanders went on, "'at gin ye can get the upper han' o' the wife for a while at first, there's the mair chance o' a harmonious exeestence."

"Bell's no the lassie," said Sam'l, appealingly, "to thwart her man."

Sanders smiled.

"D'ye think she is, Sanders?"

"Weel, Sam'l, I d'na want to fluster ye, but she's been ower lang wi' Lisbeth Fargus no to

hae learnt her ways. An' a'body kins what a life T'nowhead has wi' her."

"Guid sake, Sanders, hoo did ye no speak o' this afore?"

"I thocht ye kent o't, Sam'l."

They had now reached the square, and the U. P. kirk was coming out. The Auld Licht kirk would be half an hour yet.

"But, Sanders," said Sam'l, brightening up, "ye was on yer wy to spier her yersel."

"I was, Sam'l," said Sanders, "and I canna but be thankfu' ye was ower quick for's."

"Gin't hadna been you," said Sam'l, "I wid never hae thocht o't."

"I'm sayin' naething agin Bell," pursued the other, "but, man Sam'l, a body should be mair deleeberate in a thing o' the kind."

"It was michty hurried," said Sam'l, woefully.

"It's a serious thing to spier a lassie," said Sanders.

"It's an awfu' thing," said Sam'l.

"But we'll hope for the best," added Sanders, in a hopeless voice.

They were close to the Tenements now, and Sam'l looked as if he were on his way to be hanged.

"Sam'l?"

"Ay, Sanders."

"Did ye—did ye kiss her, Sam'l?"

"Na."

"Hoo?"

"There's was verra little time, Sanders."

"Half an 'oor," said Sanders.

"Was there? Man, Sanders, to tell ye the truth, I never thocht o't."

Then the soul of Sanders Elshioner was filled with contempt for Sam'l Dickie.

The scandal blew over. At first it was expected that the minister would interfere to prevent the union, but beyond intimating from the pulpit that the souls of Sabbath-breakers were beyond praying for, and then praying for Sam'l and Sanders, at great length, with a word thrown in for Bell, he let things take their course. Some said it was because he was always frightened lest his young men should intermarry with other denominations, but Sanders explained it differently to Sam'l.

"I hav'na a word to say agin the minister," he said; "they're gran' prayers, but, Sam'l, he's a mairit man himsel."

"He's a' the better for that, Sanders, isn he?"

"Do ye no see," asked Sanders, compassionately, "'at he's tryin' to mak the best o't?"

"Oh, Sanders, man!" said Sam'l.

"Cheer up, Sam'l," said Sanders, "it'll sune be ower."

Their having been rival suitors had not interfered with their friendship. On the contrary, while they had hitherto been mere acquaintances, they became inseparables as the wedding-day drew near. It was noticed that they had much to say to each other, and that

when they could not get a room to themselves they wandered about together in the churchyard. When Sam'l had anything to tell Bell he sent Sanders to tell it, and Sanders did as he was bid. There was nothing that he would not have done for Sam'l.

The more obliging Sanders was, however, the sadder Sam'l grew. He never laughed now on Saturdays, and sometimes his loom was silent half the day. Sam'l felt that Sanders's was the kindness of a friend for a dying man.

It was to be a penny wedding, and Lisbeth Fargus said it was delicacy that made Sam'l superintend the fitting-up of the barn by deputy. Once he came to see it in person, but he looked so ill that Sanders had to see him home. This was on the Thursday afternoon, and the wedding was fixed for Friday.

"Sanders, Sanders," said Sam'l, in a voice strangely unlike his own, "it'll a' be ower by this time the morn."

"It will," said Sanders.

"If I had only kent her langer," continued Sam'l.

"It wid hae been safer," said Sanders.

"Did ye see the yallow floor in Bell's bonnet?" asked the accepted swain.

"Ay," said Sanders, reluctantly.

"I'm dootin'—I'm sair dootin' she's but a flichty, licht-hearted crittur after a'."

"I had ay my suspeecions o't," said Sanders.

"Ye hae kent her langer than me," said Sam'l.

"Yes," said Sanders, "but there's nae gettin' at the heart o' women. Man, Sam'l, they're desperate cunnin'."

"I'm dootin't; I'm sair dootin't."

"It'll be a warnin' to ye, Sam'l, no to be in sic a hurry i' the futur," said Sanders.

Sam'l groaned.

"Ye'll be gaein' up to the manse to arrange wi' the minister the morn's mornin'," continued Sanders, in a subdued voice.

Sam'l looked wistfully at his friend.

"I canna do't, Sanders," he said, "I canna do't."

"Ye maun," said Sanders.

"It's aisy to speak," retorted Sam'l bitterly.

"We have a' oor troubles, Sam'l," said Sanders, soothingly, "an' every man maun bear his ain burdens. Johnny Davie's wife's dead, an' he's no repinin'."

"Ay," said Sam'l, "but a death's no a mairitch. We hae haen deaths in our family too."

"It may a' be for the best," added Sanders, "an' there wid be a michty talk i' the hale country-side gin ye didna ging to the minister like a man."

"I maun hae langer to think o't," said Sam'l.

"Bell's mairitch is the morn," said Sanders, decisively.

Sam'l glanced up with a wild look in his eyes.

"Sanders," he cried.

"Sam'l?"

"Ye hae been a guid friend to me, Sanders, in this sair affliction."

"Nothing ava," said Sanders; "dount mention'd."

"But, Sanders, ye canna deny but what your rinnin oot o' the kirk that awfu' day was at the bottom o'd a'."

"It was so," said Sanders, bravely.

"An' ye used to be fond o' Bell, Sanders."

"I dinna deny't."

"Sanders, laddie," said Sam'l, bending forward and speaking in a wheedling voice, "I aye thocht it was you she likeit."

"I had some sic idea mysel," said Sanders.

"Sanders, I canna think to pairt twa fowk sae weel suited to ane anither as you an' Bell."

"Canna ye, Sam'l?"

"She wid mak ye a guid wife, Sanders. I hae studied her weel, and she's a thrifty, douce, clever lassie. Sanders, there's no the like o' her. Mony a time, Sanders, I hae said to mysel, There's a lass ony man micht be prood to tak. A'body says the same, Sanders. There's nae risk ava, man: nane to speak o'. Tak her, laddie, tak her, Sanders; it's a grand chance, Sanders. She's yours for the spierin'. I'll gie her up, Sanders."

"Will ye, though?" said Sanders.

"What d'ye think?" asked Sam'l.

"If ye wid raither," said Sanders, politely.

"There's my han' on't," said Sam'l. "Bless ye, Sanders; ye've been a true frien' to me."

Then they shook hands for the first time in their lives; and soon afterward Sanders struck up the brae to T'nowhead.

Next morning Sanders Elshioner, who had been very busy the night before, put on his Sabbath clothes and strolled up to the manse.

"But—but where is Sam'l?" asked the minister; "I must see himself."

"It's a new arrangement," said Sanders.

"What do you mean, Sanders?"

"Bell's to marry me," explained Sanders.

"But—but what does Sam'l say?"

"He's willin'," said Sanders.

"And Bell?"

"She's willin', too. She prefers't."

"It is unusual," said the minister.

"It's a' richt," said Sanders.

"Well, you know best," said the minister.

"You see the house was taen, at ony rate,' continued Sanders. "An' I'll juist ging in til't instead o' Sam'l."

"Quite so."

"An' I cudna think to disappoint the lassie."

"Your sentiments do you credit, Sanders," said the minister; "but I hope you do not enter upon the blessed state of matrimony without full consideration of its responsibilities. It is a serious business—marriage."

"It's a' that," said Sanders, "but I'm willin' to stan' the risk."

So, as soon as it could be done, Sanders Elshioner took to wife T'nowhead's Bell, and I

remember seeing Sam'l Dickie trying to dance at the penny wedding.

Years afterward it was said in Thrums that Sam'l had treated Bell badly, but he was never sure about it himself.

"It was a near thing—a michty near thing," he admitted in the square.

"They say," some other weaver would remark, "'at it was you Bell liked best."

"I d'na kin," Sam'l would reply, "but there's nae doot the lassie was fell fond o' me. Ou, a mere passin' fancy's ye micht say."

THE OUTCASTS OF POKER FLAT*

BY

FRANCIS BRET HARTE

As Mr. John Oakhurst, gambler, stepped into the main street of Poker Flat on the morning of the 23d of November, 1850, he was conscious of a change in its moral atmosphere since the preceding night. Two or three men, conversing earnestly together, ceased as he approached, and exchanged significant glances. There was a Sabbath lull in the air, which, in a settlement unused to Sabbath influences, looked ominous.

Mr. Oakhurst's calm, handsome face betrayed small concern in these indications. Whether he was conscious of any predisposing cause was another question. "I reckon they're after somebody," he reflected; "likely it's me." He returned to his pocket the handkerchief with which he had been whipping away the red dust of Poker Flat from his neat boots, and quietly discharged his mind of any further conjecture.

In point of fact, Poker Flat was "after somebody." It had lately suffered the loss of several thousand dollars, two valuable horses, and

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a prominent citizen. It was experiencing a spasm of virtuous reaction, quite as lawless and ungovernable as any of the acts that had provoked it. A secret committee had determined to rid the town of all improper persons. This was done permanently in regard of two men who were then hanging from the boughs of a sycamore in the gulch, and temporarily in the banishment of certain other objectionable characters. I regret to say that some of these were ladies. It is but due to the sex, however, to state that their impropriety was professional, and it was only in such easily established standards of evil that Poker Flat ventured to sit in judgment.

Mr. Oakhurst was right in supposing that he was included in this category. A few of the committee had urged hanging him as a possible example and a sure method of reimbursing themselves from his pockets for the sums he had won from them. "It's agin justice," said Jim Wheeler, "to let this yer young man from Roaring Camp—an entire stranger—carry away our money." But a crude sentiment of equity residing in the breasts of those who had been fortunate enough to win from Mr. Oakhurst overruled this narrower local prejudice.

Mr. Oakhurst received his sentence with philosophic calmness, none the less coolly that he was aware of the hesitation of his judges. He was too much of a gambler not to accept fate. With him, life was at best an uncertain game,

and he recognised the usual percentage in favour of the dealer.

A body of armed men accompanied the deported wickedness of Poker Flat to the outskirts of the settlement. Besides Mr. Oakhurst, who was known to be a coolly desperate man, and for whose intimidation the armed escort was intended, the expatriated party consisted of a young woman familiarly known as "The Duchess"; another who had won the title of "Mother Shipton"; and "Uncle Billy," a suspected sluice-robber and confirmed drunkard. The cavalcade provoked no comments from the spectators, nor was any word uttered by the escort. Only when the gulch which marked the uttermost limit of Poker Flat was reached the leader spoke briefly and to the point. The exiles were forbidden to return at the peril of their lives.

As the escort disappeared, their pent-up feelings found vent in a few hysterical tears from the Duchess, some bad language from Mother Shipton, and a Parthian volley of expletives from Uncle Billy. The philosophic Oakhurst alone remained silent. He listened calmly to Mother Shipton's desire to cut somebody's heart out, to the repeated statements of the Duchess that she would die in the road, and to the alarming oaths that seemed to be bumped out of Uncle Billy as he rode forward. With the easy good humour characteristic of his class, he insisted upon exchanging his own riding horse, "Five-Spot,"

for the sorry mule which the Duchess rode. But even this act did not draw the party into any closer sympathy. The young woman readjusted her somewhat draggled plumes with a feeble, faded coquetry; Mother Shipton eyed the possessor of "Five-Spot" with malevolence; and Uncle Billy included the whole party in one sweeping anathema.

The road to Sandy Bar—a camp that, not having as yet experienced the regenerating influences of Poker Flat, consequently seemed to offer some invitation to the emigrants—lay over a steep mountain range. It was distant a day's severe travel. In that advanced season, the party soon passed out of the moist, temperate regions of the foothills into the dry, cold, bracing air of the Sierras. The trail was narrow and difficult. At noon the Duchess, rolling out of her saddle upon the ground, declared her intention of going no farther, and the party halted.

The spot was singularly wild and impressive. A wooded amphitheatre, surrounded on three sides by precipitous cliffs of naked granite, sloped gently toward the crest of another precipice that overlooked the valley. It was, undoubtedly, the most suitable spot for a camp, had camping been advisable. But Mr. Oakhurst knew that scarcely half the journey to Sandy Bar was accomplished, and the party were not equipped or provisioned for delay. This fact he pointed out to his companions curtly, with a philosophic commentary on the folly of

"throwing up their hand before the game was played out." But they were furnished with liquor, which, in this emergency, stood them in place of food, fuel, rest, and prescience. In spite of his remonstrances, it was not long before they were more or less under its influence. Uncle Billy passed rapidly from a bellicose state into one of stupor, the Duchess became maudlin, and Mother Shipton snored. Mr. Oakhurst alone remained erect, leaning against a rock, calmly surveying them.

Mr. Oakhurst did not drink. It interfered with a profession which required coolness, impassiveness, and presence of mind, and, in his own language, he "couldn't afford it." As he gazed at his recumbent fellow exiles, the loneliness begotten of his pariah trade, his habits of life, his very vices, for the first time seriously oppressed him. He bestirred himself in dusting his black clothes, washing his hands and face, and other acts characteristic of his studiously neat habits, and for a moment forgot his annoyance. The thought of deserting his weaker and more pitiable companions never perhaps occurred to him. Yet he could not help feeling the want of that excitement which, singularly enough, was most conducive to that calm equanimity for which he was notorious. He looked at the gloomy walls that rose a thousand feet sheer above the circling pines around him, at the sky ominously clouded, at the valley below, already deepening into shadow; and

doing so, suddenly he heard his own name called.

A horseman slowly ascended the trail. In the fresh, open face of the newcomer, Mr. Oakhurst recognised Tom Simson, otherwise known as "The Innocent," of Sandy Bar. He had met him some months before over a "little game," and had, with perfect equanimity, won the entire fortune—amounting to some forty dollars—of that guileless youth. After the game was finished, Mr. Oakhurst drew the youthful speculator behind the door, and thus addressed him: "Tommy, you're a good little man, but you can't gamble worth a cent. Don't try it over again." He then handed him his money back, pushed him gently from the room, and so made a devoted slave of Tom Simson.

There was a remembrance of this in his boyish and enthusiastic greeting of Mr. Oakhurst. He had started, he said, to go to Poker Flat to seek his fortune. "Alone?" No, not exactly alone; in fact (a giggle), he had run away with Piney Woods. Didn't Mr. Oakhurst remember Piney? She that used to wait on the table at the Temperance House? They had been engaged a long time, but old Jake Woods had objected, and so they had run away, and were going to Poker Flat to be married, and here they were. And they were tired out, and how lucky it was they had found a place to camp, and company. All this the Innocent delivered rapidly, while Piney, a stout, comely damsel of fifteen, emerged

from behind the pine-tree, where she had been blushing unseen, and rode to the side of her lover.

Mr. Oakhurst seldom troubled himself with sentiment, still less with propriety; but he had a vague idea that the situation was not fortunate. He retained, however, his presence of mind sufficiently to kick Uncle Billy, who was about to say something, and Uncle Billy was sober enough to recognise in Mr. Oakhurst's kick a superior power that would not bear trifling. He then endeavoured to dissuade Tom Simson from delaying further, but in vain. He even pointed out the fact that there was no provision, nor means of making a camp. But, unluckily, the Innocent met this objection by assuring the party that he was provided with an extra mule loaded with provisions, and by the discovery of a rude attempt at a log house near the trail. "Piney can stay with Mrs. Oakhurst," said the Innocent, pointing to the Duchess, "and I can shift for myself."

Nothing but Mr. Oakhurst's admonishing foot saved Uncle Billy from bursting into a roar of laughter. As it was, he felt compelled to retire up the cañon until he could recover his gravity. There he confided the joke to the tall pine-trees, with many slaps of his leg, contortions of his face, and the usual profanity. But, when he returned to the party, he found them seated by a fire—for the air had grown strangely chill and the sky overcast—in apparently amicable con-

versation. Piney was actually talking in an impulsive, girlish fashion to the Duchess, who was listening with an interest and animation she had not shown for many days. The Innocent was holding forth, apparently with equal effect, to Mr. Oakhurst and Mother Shipton, who was actually relaxing into amiability. "Is this yer a d—d picnic?" said Uncle Billy, with inward scorn, as he surveyed the sylvan group, the glancing firelight, and the tethered animals in the foreground. Suddenly an idea mingled with the alcoholic fumes that disturbed his brain. It was apparently of a jocular nature, for he felt impelled to slap his leg again and cram his fist into his mouth.

As the shadows crept slowly up the mountain, a slight breeze rocked the tops of the pine-trees and moaned through their long and gloomy aisles. The ruined cabin, patched and covered with pine boughs, was set apart for the ladies. As the lovers parted they unaffectedly exchanged a kiss, so honest and sincere that it might have been heard above the swaying pines. The frail Duchess and the malevolent Mother Shipton were probably too stunned to remark upon this last evidence of simplicity, and so turned without a word to the hut. The fire was replenished, the men lay down before the door, and in a few minutes were asleep.

Mr. Oakhurst was a light sleeper. Toward morning he awoke benumbed and cold. As he stirred the dying fire, the wind, which was now

blowing strongly, brought to his cheek that which caused the blood to leave it—snow!

He started to his feet with the intention of awakening the sleepers, for there was no time to lose. But turning to where Uncly Billy had been lying, he found him gone. A suspicion leaped to his brain, and a curse to his lips. He ran to the spot where the mules had been tethered—they were no longer there. The tracks were already rapidly disappearing in the snow.

The momentary excitement brought Mr. Oakhurst back to the fire with his usual calm. He did not waken the sleepers. The Innocent slumbered peacefully, with a smile on his good-humoured, freckled face; the virgin Piney slept beside her frailer sisters as sweetly as though attended by celestial guardians; and Mr. Oakhurst, drawing his blanket over his shoulders, stroked his mustaches, and waited for the dawn. It came slowly in a whirling mist of snowflakes that dazzled and confused the eye. What could be seen of the landscape appeared magically changed. He looked over the valley, and summed up the present and future in two words, "Snowed in!"

A careful inventory of the provisions, which, fortunately for the party, had been stored within the hut, and so escaped the felonious fingers of Uncle Billy, disclosed the fact that, with care and prudence, they might last ten days longer. "That is," said Mr. Oakhurst *sotto voce* to the Innocent, "if you're willing to board us. If you ain't—

and perhaps you'd better not—you can wait till Uncle Billy gets back with provisions." For some occult reason, Mr. Oakhurst could not bring himself to disclose Uncle Billy's rascality, and so offered the hypothesis that he had wandered from the camp, and had accidentally stampeded the animals. He dropped a warning to the Duchess and Mother Shipton, who, of course, knew the facts of their associate's defection. "They'll find out the truth about us *all* when they find out anything," he added significantly, "and there's no good frightening them now."

Tom Simson not only put all his worldly store at the disposal of Mr. Oakhurst, but seemed to enjoy the prospect of their enforced seclusion. "We'll have a good camp for a week, and then the snow'll melt, and we'll all go back together." The cheerful gayety of the young man and Mr. Oakhurst's calm infected the others. The Innocent, with the aid of pine boughs, extemporised a thatch for the roofless cabin, and the Duchess directed Piney in the rearrangement of the interior with a taste and tact that opened the blue eyes of that provincial maiden to their fullest extent. "I reckon now you're used to fine things at Poker Flat," said Piney. The Duchess turned away sharply to conceal something that reddened her cheeks through their professional tint, and Mother Shipton requested Piney not to "chatter." But, when Mr. Oakhurst returned from a weary search for the trail, he heard the sound of happy laughter echoed from the rocks.

He stopped in some alarm, and his thoughts first naturally reverted to the whisky, which he had prudently cachéd. "And yet it don't somehow sound like whisky," said the gambler. It was not until he caught sight of the blazing fire through the still blinding storm, and the group around it, that he settled to the conviction that it was "square fun."

Whether Mr. Oakhurst had cachéd his cards with the whisky as something debarred the free access of the community, I cannot say. It was certain that, in Mother Shipton's words, he "didn't say 'cards' once" during that evening. Haply, the time was beguiled by an accordion, produced somewhat ostentatiously by Tom Simson from his pack. Notwithstanding some difficulties attending the manipulation of this instrument, Piney Woods managed to pluck several reluctant melodies from its keys, to an accompaniment by the Innocent on a pair of bone castanets. But the crowning festivity of the evening was reached in a rude camp-meeting hymn, which the lovers, joining hands, sang with great earnestness and vociferation. I fear that a certain defiant tone and Covenanter's swing to its chorus, rather than any devotional quality, caused it speedily to infect the others, who at last joined in the refrain—

> "I'm proud to live in the service of the Lord,
> And I am bound to die in His army."

The pines rocked, the storm eddied and whirled

above the miserable group, and the flames of their altar leaped heavenward, as if in token of the vow.

At midnight the storm abated, the rolling clouds parted, and the stars glittered keenly above the sleeping camp. Mr. Oakhurst, whose professional habits had enabled him to live on the smallest possible amount of sleep, in dividing the watch with Tom Simson somehow managed to take upon himself the greater part of that duty. He excused himself to the Innocent by saying that he had "often been a week without sleep." "Doing what?" asked Tom. "Poker!" replied Oakhurst sententiously. "When a man gets a streak of luck—nigger-luck—he don't get tired. The luck gives in first. Luck," continued the gambler reflectively, "is a mighty queer thing. All you know about it for certain is that it's bound to change. And it's finding out when it's going to change that makes you. We've had a streak of bad luck since we left Poker Flat—you come along, and, slap, you get into it, too. If you can hold your cards right along, you're all right. For," added the gambler, with cheerful irrelevance—

> "'I'm proud to live in the service of the Lord
> And I'm bound to die in His army.'"

The third day came, and the sun, looking through the white-curtained valley, saw the outcasts divide their slowly decreasing store of provisions for the morning meal. It was one of

the peculiarities of that mountain climate that its rays diffused a kindly warmth over the wintry landscape, as if in regretful commiseration of the past. But it revealed drift on drift of snow piled high around the hut—a hopeless, uncharted, trackless sea of white lying below the rocky shores to which the castaways still clung. Through the marvellously clear air, the smoke of the pastoral village of Poker Flat rose miles away. Mother Shipton saw it, and, from a remote pinnacle of her rocky fastness, hurled in that direction a final malediction. It was her last vituperative attempt, and, perhaps for that reason, was invested with a certain degree of sublimity. It did her good, she privately informed the Duchess.

"Just you go out there, and cuss, and see." She then set herself to the task of amusing "the child," as she and the Duchess were pleased to call Piney. Piney was no chicken, but it was a soothing and original theory of the pair thus to account for the fact that she didn't swear and wasn't improper.

When night crept up again through the gorges the reedy notes of the accordion rose and fell in fitful spasms and long-drawn gasps by the flickering campfire. But music failed to fill entirely the aching void left by insufficient food, and a new diversion was proposed by Piney—story-telling. Neither Mr. Oakhurst nor his female companions caring to relate their personal experiences, this plan would have failed too, but for the Innocent. Some months before, he had

chanced upon a stray copy of Mr. Pope's ingenious translation of the Iliad. He now proposed to narrate the principal incidents of that poem—having thoroughly mastered the argument and fairly forgotten the words—in the current vernacular of Sandy Bar. And so, for the rest of that night, the Homeric demigods again walked the earth. Trojan bully and wily Greek wrestled in the winds, and the great pines in the cañon seemed to bow to the wrath of the son of Peleus. Mr. Oakhurst listened with quiet satisfaction. Most especially was he interested in the fate of "Ash-heels," as the Innocent persisted in denominating the "swift-footed Achilles."

So, with small food and much of Homer and the accordion, a week passed over the heads of the outcasts. The sun again forsook them, and again from leaden skies the snowflakes were sifted over the land. Day by day, closer around them drew the snowy circle, until at last they looked from their prison over drifted walls of dazzling white, that towered 20 feet above their heads. It became more and more difficult to replenish their fires, even from the fallen trees beside them, now half hidden in the drifts. And yet no one complained. The lovers turned from the dreary prospect, and looked into each other's eyes, and were happy. Mr. Oakhurst settled himself coolly to the losing game before him. The Duchess, more cheerful than she had been, assumed the care of Piney. Only Mother Shipton—once the strongest of the party—seemed

to sicken and fade. At midnight on the tenth day she called Oakhurst to her side. "I'm going," she said, in a voice of querulous weakness, "but don't say anything about it. Don't waken the kids. Take the bundle from under my head, and open it." Mr. Oakhurst did so. It contained Mother Shipton's rations for the last week, untouched. "Give 'em to the child," she said, pointing to the sleeping Piney. "You've starved yourself," said the gambler. "That's what they call it," said the woman querulously, as she lay down again, and, turning her face to the wall, passed quietly away.

The accordion and the bones were put aside that day, and Homer was forgotten. When the body of Mother Shipton had been committed to the snow, Mr. Oakhurst took the Innocent aside, and showed him a pair of snowshoes, which he had fashioned from the old pack-saddle. "There's one chance in a hundred to save her yet," he said, pointing to Piney; "but it's there," he added, pointing toward Poker Flat. "If you can reach there in two days, she's safe." "And you?" asked Tom Simson. "I'll stay here," was the curt reply.

The lovers parted with a long embrace. "You are not going, too?" said the Duchess, as she saw Mr. Oakhurst apparently waiting to accompany him. "As far as the cañon," he replied. He turned suddenly, and kissed the Duchess, leaving her pallid face aflame, and her trembling limbs rigid with amazement.

Night came, but not Mr. Oakhurst. It brought the storm again and the whirling snow. Then the Duchess, feeding the fire, found that some one had quietly piled beside the hut enough fuel to last a few days longer. The tears rose to her eyes, but she hid them from Piney.

The women slept but little. In the morning, looking into each other's faces, they read their fate. Neither spoke, but Piney, accepting the position of the stronger, drew near and placed her arm around the Duchess's waist. They kept this attitude for the rest of the day. That night the storm reached its greatest fury, and, rending asunder the protecting vines, invaded the very hut.

Toward morning they found themselves unable to feed the fire, which gradually died away. As the embers slowly blackened, the Duchess crept closer to Piney, and broke the silence of many hours: "Piney, can you pray?" "No, dear," said Piney simply. The Duchess, without knowing exactly why, felt relieved, and, putting her head upon Piney's shoulder, spoke no more. And so reclining, the younger and purer pillowing the head of her soiled sister upon her virgin breast, they fell asleep.

The wind lulled as if it feared to waken them. Feathery drifts of snow, shaken from the long pine boughs, flew like white-winged birds, and settled about them as they slept. The moon, through the rifted clouds, looked down upon what had been the camp. But all human stain, all

trace of earthly travail, was hidden beneath the spotless mantle mercifully flung from above.

They slept all that day and the next, nor did they waken when voices and footsteps broke the silence of the camp. And when pitying fingers brushed the snow from their wan faces, you could scarcely have told from the equal peace that dwelt upon them which was she that had sinned. Even the law of Poker Flat recognised this, and turned away, leaving them still locked in each other's arms.

But, at the head of the gulch, on one of the largest pine-trees, they found the deuce of clubs pinned to the bark with a bowie-knife. It bore the following, written in pencil in a firm hand:

†

BENEATH THIS TREE
LIES THE BODY
OF
JOHN OAKHURST,
WHO STRUCK A STREAK OF BAD LUCK
ON THE 23D OF NOVEMBER, 1850,
AND
HANDED IN HIS CHECKS
ON THE 7TH DECEMBER, 1850

‡

And pulseless and cold, with a Derringer by his side and a bullet in his heart, though still calm as in life, beneath the snow lay he who was at once the strongest and yet the weakest of the outcasts of Poker Flat.

THE ATTACK ON THE MILL*

BY

ÉMILE ZOLA

I

IT was high holiday at Father Merlier's mill on that pleasant summer afternoon. Three tables had been brought out into the garden and placed end to end in the shade of the great elm, and now they were awaiting the arrival of the guests. It was known throughout the length and breadth of the land that that day was to witness the betrothal of old Merlier's daughter, Françoise, to Dominique, a young man who was said to be not overfond of work, but whom never a woman for three leagues of the country around could look at without sparkling eyes, such a well-favoured young fellow was he.

That mill of Father Merlier's was truly a very pleasant spot. It was situated right in the heart of Rocreuse, at the place where the main road makes a sharp bend. The village has but a single street, bordered on either side by a row of low, whitened cottages, but just there, where the road curves, there are broad stretches of meadow-

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land, and huge trees, which follow the course of the Morelle, cover the low grounds of the valley with a most delicious shade. All Lorraine has no more charming bit of nature to show. To right and left dense forests, great monarchs of the wood, centuries old, rise from the gentle slopes, and fill the horizon with a sea of waving, trembling verdure, while away toward the south extends the plain, of wondrous fertility and checkered almost to infinity with its small inclosures, divided off from one another by their live hedges. But what makes the crowning glory of Rocreuse is the coolness of this verdurous nook, even in the hottest days of July and August. The Morelle comes down from the woods of Gagny, and it would seem as if it gathered to itself on the way all the delicious freshness of the foliage beneath which it glides for many a league; it brings down with it the murmuring sounds, the glacial, solemn shadows of the forest. And that is not the only source of coolness; there are running waters of all sorts singing among the copses; one cannot take a step without coming on a gushing spring, and, as he makes his way along the narrow paths, seems to be treading above subterrene lakes that seek the air and sunshine through the moss above, and profit by every smallest crevice, at the roots of trees or among the chinks and crannies of the rocks, to burst forth in fountains of crystalline clearness. So numerous and so loud are the whispering voices of these streams that they silence the song of the

bullfinches. It is as if one were in an enchanted park, with cascades falling and flashing on every side.

The meadows below are never athirst. The shadows beneath the gigantic chestnut trees are of inky blackness, and along the edges of the fields long rows of poplars stand like walls of rustling foliage. There is a double avenue of huge plane trees ascending across the fields toward the ancient castle of Gagny, now gone to rack and ruin. In this region, where drought is never known, vegetation of all kinds is wonderfully rank; it is like a flower garden down there in the low ground between those two wooded hills, a natural garden, where the lawns are broad meadows and the giant trees represent colossal beds. When the noonday sun pours down his scorching rays, the shadows lie blue upon the ground, vegetation slumbers in the genial warmth, while every now and then a breath of almost icy coldness rustles the foliage.

Such was the spot where Father Merlier's mill enlivened nature run riot with its cheerful clack. The building itself, constructed of wood and plaster, looked as if it might be coeval with our planet. Its foundations were in part laved by the Morelle, which here expands into a clear pool. A dam, a few feet in height, afforded sufficient head of water to drive the old wheel, which creaked and groaned as it revolved, with the asthmatic wheezing of a faithful servant who has grown old in her place. Whenever Father Merlier was advised to

change it, he would shake his head and say that like as not a young wheel would be lazier and not so well acquainted with its duties, and then he would set to work and patch up the old one with anything that came to hand, old hogshead-staves, bits of rusty iron, zinc, or lead. The old wheel only seemed the gayer for it, with its odd, round countenance, all plumed and feathered with tufts of moss and grass, and, when the water poured over it in a silvery tide, its gaunt black skeleton was decked out with a gorgeous display of pearls and diamonds.

That portion of the mill which was bathed by the Morelle had something of the look of a Moorish arch that had been dropped down here by chance. A good half of the structure was built on piles; the water came in under the floor, and there were deep holes, famous throughout the whole country for the eels and the huge crawfish that were to be caught there. Below the fall, the pool was as clear as a looking-glass, and, when it was not clouded by foam from the wheel, one could see great fish swimming about in it with the slow, majestic movements of a fleet. There was a broken stairway leading down to the stream, near a stake to which a boat was fastened, and over the wheel was a gallery of wood. Such windows as there were, were arranged without any attempt at order. The whole was a quaint conglomeration of nooks and corners, bits of wall, additions made here and there as afterthoughts, beams and roofs, that gave the mill the aspect of

an old dismantled citadel; but ivy and all sorts of creeping plants had grown luxuriantly, and kindly covered up such crevices as were too unsightly, casting a mantle of green over the old dwelling. Young ladies who passed that way used to stop and sketch Father Merlier's mill in their albums.

The side of the house that faced the road was less irregular. A gateway in stone afforded access to the principal courtyard, on the right and left hand of which were sheds and stables. Beside a well stood an immense elm that threw its shade over half the court. At the farther end, opposite the gate, stood the house, surmounted by a dovecote, the four windows of its first floor symmetrically aligned. The only manifestation of pride that Father Merlier ever allowed himself was to paint this façade every ten years. It had just been freshly whitened at the time of our story, and dazzled the eyes of all the village when the sun lighted it up in the middle of the day.

For twenty years had Father Merlier been mayor of Rocreuse. He was held in great consideration on account of his fortune; he was supposed to be worth something like eighty thousand francs, the result of patient saving. When he married Madeleine Guilliard, who brought him the mill as her dowry, his entire capital lay in his two strong arms, but Madeleine had never repented her choice, so manfully had he conducted their joint affairs. Now his wife was dead, and he was left a widower with his daughter

Françoise. Doubtless, he might have sat himself down to take his rest and suffered the old mill-wheel to sleep among its moss, but he would have found the occupation too irksome, and the house would have seemed dead to him, so he kept on working still, for the pleasure of it. In those days, Father Merlier was a tall old man, with a long, unspeaking face, on which a laugh was never seen, but beneath which there lay, none the less, a large fund of good-humour. He had been elected mayor on account of his money, and also for the impressive air that he knew how to assume when it devolved on him to marry a couple.

Françoise Merlier had just completed her eighteenth year. She was small, and for that reason was not accounted one of the beauties of the country. Until she reached the age of fifteen, she was even homely; the good folks of Rocreuse could not see how it was that the daughter of Father and Mother Merlier, such a hale, vigorous couple, had such a hard time of it in getting her growth. When she was fifteen, however, though still remaining delicate, a change came over her, and she took on the prettiest little face imaginable. She had black eyes, black hair, and was red as a rose withal; her little mouth was always graced with a charming smile, there were delicious dimples in her cheeks, and a crown of sunshine seemed to be ever resting on her fair, candid forehead. Although small as girls went in that region, she was far from being slender; she might not have been able to raise a sack of wheat to her

shoulder, but she became quite plump with age, and gave promise of becoming eventually as well-rounded and appetising as a partridge. Her father's habits of taciturnity had made her reflective while yet a young girl; if she always had a smile on her lips, it was in order to give pleasure to others. Her natural disposition was serious.

As was no more than to be expected, she had every young man in the country-side at her heels as a suitor, more even for her money than for her attractiveness, and she had made a choice at last —a choice that had been the talk and scandal of the entire neighbourhood. On the other side of the Morene lived a strapping young fellow who went by the name of Dominique Penquer. He was not to the manor born; ten years previously he had come to Rocreuse from Belgium to receive the inheritance of an uncle who had owned a small property on the very borders of the forest of Gagny, just facing the mill and distant from it only a few musket-shots. His object in coming was to sell the property, so he said, and return to his own home again; but he must have found the land to his liking, for he made no move to go away. He was seen cultivating his bit of a field and gathering the few vegetables that afforded him an existence. He hunted, he fished; more than once he was near coming in contact with the law through the intervention of the keepers. This independent way of living, of which the peasants could not very clearly see the resources,

had in the end given him a bad name. He was vaguely looked on as nothing better than a poacher. At all events, he was lazy, for he was frequently found sleeping in the grass at hours when he should have been at work. Then, too, the hut in which he lived, in the shade of the last trees of the forest, did not seem like the abode of an honest young man; the old women would not have been surprised at any time to hear that he was on friendly terms with the wolves in the ruins of Gagny. Still, the young girls would now and then venture to stand up for him, for he was altogether a splendid specimen of manhood, was this individual of doubtful antecedents, tall and straight as a young poplar, with a milk-white skin and ruddy hair and beard that seemed to be of gold when the sun shone on them. Now, one fine morning, it came to pass that Françoise told Father Merlier that she loved Dominique, and that never, never would she consent to marry any other young man.

It may be imagined what a knock-down blow it was that Father Merlier received that day! As was his wont, he said never a word; his countenance wore its usual reflective look, only the fun that used to bubble up from within no longer shone in his eyes. Françoise, too, was very serious, and for a week father and daughter scarcely spoke to each other. What troubled Father Merlier was to know how that rascal of a poacher had succeeded in bewitching his daughter. Dominique had never shown himself at the

mill. The miller played the spy a little, and was rewarded by catching sight of the gallant, on the other side of the Morelle, lying among the grass and pretending to be asleep. Françoise could see him from her chamber window. The thing was clear enough; they had been making sheep's eyes at each other over the old mill-wheel, and so had fallen in love.

A week slipped by; Françoise became more and more serious. Father Merlier still continued to say nothing. Then, one evening, of his own accord, he brought Dominique to the house, without a word. Françoise was just setting the table. She made no demonstration of surprise; all she did was to add another plate, but her laugh had come back to her, and the little dimples appeared again upon her cheeks. Father Merlier had gone that morning to look for Dominique at his hut on the edge of the forest, and there the two men had had a conference, with closed doors and windows, that lasted three hours. No one ever knew what they said to each other; the only thing certain is that, when Father Merlier left the hut, he already treated Dominique as a son. Doubtless, the old man had discovered that he whom he had gone to visit was a worthy young man, even though he did lie in the grass to gain the love of young girls.

All Rocreuse was up in arms. The women gathered at their doors and could not find words strong enough to characterise Father Merlier's folly in thus receiving a ne'er-do-well into his

family. He let them talk. Perhaps he thought of his own marriage. Neither had he possessed a penny to his name at the time when he married Madeleine and her mill, and yet that had not prevented him from being a good husband to her. Moreover, Dominique put an end to their tittle-tattle by setting to work in such strenuous fashion that all the countryside was amazed. It so happened just then that the boy of the mill drew an unlucky number, and had to go for a soldier, and Dominique would not hear of their engaging another. He lifted sacks, drove the cart, wrestled with the old wheel when it took an obstinate fit and refused to turn, and all so pluckily and cheerfully that people came from far and near merely for the pleasure of seeing him. Father Merlier laughed his silent laugh. He was highly elated that he had read the youngster aright. There is nothing like love to hearten up young men.

In the midst of all that laborious toil, Françoise and Dominique fairly worshipped each other. They had not much to say, but their tender smiles conveyed a world of meaning. Father Merlier had not said a word thus far on the subject of their marriage, and they had both respected his silence, waiting until the old man should see fit to give expression to his will. At last, one day along toward the middle of July, he had had three tables laid in the courtyard, in the shade of the big elm, and had invited his friends of Rocreuse to come that afternoon and drink a

glass of wine with him. When the courtyard was filled with people and every one there had a full glass in his hand, Father Merlier raised his own high above his head and said:

"I have the pleasure of announcing to you that Françoise and this stripling will be married in a month from now, on Saint Louis' fête-day."

Then there was a universal touching of glasses, attended by a tremendous uproar; every one was laughing. But Father Merlier, raising his voice above the din, again spoke:

"Dominique, kiss your wife that is to be. It is no more than customary."

And they kissed, very red in the face, both of them, while the company laughed still louder. It was a regular fête; they emptied a small cask. Then, when only the intimate friends of the house remained, conversation went on in a calmer strain. Night had fallen, a starlit night and very clear. Dominique and Françoise sat on a bench, side by side, and said nothing. An old peasant spoke of the war that the emperor had declared against Prussia. All the lads of the village were already gone off to the army. Troops had passed through the place only the night before. There were going to be hard knocks.

"Bah!" said Father Merlier, with the selfishness of a man who is quite happy, "Dominique is a foreigner; he won't have to go—and, if the Prussians come this way, he will be here to defend his wife."

The idea of the Prussians coming there seemed

to the company an exceedingly good joke. The army would give them one good, conscientious thrashing, and the affair would be quickly ended.

"I have seen them, I have seen them," the old peasant repeated in a low voice.

There was silence for a little, then they all touched glasses once again. Françoise and Dominique had heard nothing; they had managed to clasp hands behind the bench in such a way as not to be seen by the others, and this condition of affairs seemed so beatific to them that they sat there, mute, their gaze lost in the darkness of the night.

What a magnificent, balmy night! The village lay slumbering on either side of the white road as peacefully as a little child. The deep silence was undisturbed save by the occasional crow of a cock in some distant barnyard, acting on a mistaken impression that dawn was at hand. Perfumed breaths of air, like long-drawn sighs, almost, came down from the great woods that lay around and above, sweeping softly over the roofs, as if caressing them. The meadows, with their black intensity of shadows, took on a dim, mysterious majesty of their own, while all the springs, all the brooks and watercourses that gurgled and trickled in the darkness, might have been taken for the cool and rhythmical breathing of the sleeping country. Every now and then the old dozing mill-wheel, like a watch-dog that barks uneasily in his slumber, seemed to be dreaming as if it were endowed with some strange

form of life; it creaked, it groaned, it talked to itself, rocked by the fall of the Morelle, whose current gave forth the deep, sustained music of an organ-pipe. Never was there a more charming or happier nook; never did more entire or deeper peace come down to cover it.

II

One month later to a day, on the eve of the fête of Saint Louis, Rocreuse was in a state of alarm and dismay. The Prussians had beaten the emperor, and were advancing on the village by forced marches. For a week past, people passing along the road had brought tidings of the enemy: "They are at Lormières, they are at Novelles"; and, by dint of hearing so many stories of the rapidity of their advance, Rocreuse woke up every morning in the full expectation of seeing them swarming down out of Gagny wood. They did not come, however, and that only served to make the affright the greater. They would certainly fall upon the village in the night-time, and put every soul to the sword.

There had been an alarm the night before, a little before daybreak. The inhabitants had been aroused by a great noise of men tramping upon the road. The women were already throwing themselves upon their knees and making the sign of the cross when some one, to whom it happily occurred to peep through a half-opened window, caught sight of red trousers. It was a

French detachment. The captain had forthwith asked for the mayor, and, after a long conversation with Father Merlier, had remained at the mill.

The sun rose bright and clear that morning, giving promise of a warm day. There was a golden light floating over the woodland, while, in the low grounds, white mists were rising from the meadows. The pretty village, so neat and trim, awoke in the cool dawning, and the country, with its stream and its fountains, was as gracious as a freshly plucked bouquet. But the beauty of the day brought gladness to the face of no one; the villagers had watched the captain, and seen him circle round and round the old mill, examine the adjacent houses, then pass to the other bank of the Morelle, and from thence scan the country with a field-glass: Father Merlier, who accompanied him, appeared to be giving explanations. After that, the captain had posted some of his men behind walls, behind trees, or in hollows. The main body of the detachment had encamped in the courtyard of the mill. So there was going to be a fight, then? And when Father Merlier returned, they questioned him. He spoke no word, but slowly and sorrowfully nodded his head. Yes, there was going to be a fight.

Françoise and Dominique were there in the courtyard, watching him. He finally took his pipe from his lips, and gave utterance to these few words:

"Ah! my poor children, I shall not be able to marry you to-day!"

Dominique, with lips tight set and an angry frown upon his forehead, raised himself on tiptoe from time to time, and stood with eyes bent on Gagny wood, as if he would have been glad to see the Prussians appear and end the suspense they were in. Françoise, whose face was grave and very pale, was constantly passing back and forth, supplying the needs of the soldiers. They were preparing their soup in a corner of the courtyard, joking and chaffing one another while awaiting their meal.

The captain appeared to be highly pleased. He had visited the chambers and the great hall of the mill that looked out on the stream. Now seated beside the well, he was conversing with Father Merlier.

"You have a regular fortress here," he was saying. "We shall have no trouble in holding it until evening. The bandits are late; they ought to be here by this time."

The miller looked very grave. He saw his beloved mill going up in flame and smoke, but uttered no word of remonstrance or complaint, considering that it would be useless. He only opened his mouth to say:

"You ought to take steps to hide the boat; there is a hole behind the wheel fitted to hold it. Perhaps you may find it of use to you."

The captain gave an order to one of his men. This captain was a tall, fine-looking man of about

forty, with an agreeable expression of countenance. The sight of Dominique and Françoise seemed to afford him much pleasure; he watched them as if he had forgotten all about the approaching conflict. He followed Françoise with his eyes as she moved about the courtyard, and his manner showed clearly enough that he thought her charming. Then, turning to Dominique:

"You are not with the army, I see, my boy?" he abruptly asked.

"I am a foreigner," the young man replied.

The captain did not seem particularly pleased with the answer; he winked his eyes, and smiled. Françoise was doubtless a more agreeable companion than a musket would have been. Dominique, noticing his smile, made haste to add:

"I am a foreigner, but I can lodge a rifle-bullet in an apple at five hundred yards. See, there's my rifle, behind you."

"You may find use for it," the captain dryly answered.

Françoise had drawn near; she was trembling a little, and Dominique, regardless of the bystanders, took and held firmly clasped in his own the two hands that she held forth to him, as if committing herself to his protection. The captain smiled again, but said nothing more. He remained seated, his sword between his legs, his eyes fixed on space, apparently lost in dreamy reverie.

It was ten o'clock. The heat was already oppressive. A deep silence prevailed. The soldiers had sat down in the shade of the sheds in the courtyard, and begun to eat their soup. Not a sound came from the village, where the inhabitants had all barricaded their houses, doors, and windows. A dog, abandoned by his master, howled mournfully upon the road. From the woods and the near-by meadows, that lay fainting in the heat, came a long-drawn whispering, soughing sound, produced by the union of what wandering breaths of air there were. A cuckoo sang. Then the silence became deeper still.

And all at once, upon that lazy, sleepy air, a shot rang out. The captain rose quickly to his feet; the soldiers left their half-emptied plates. In a few seconds, all were at their posts; the mill was occupied from top to bottom. And yet the captain, who had gone out through the gate, saw nothing; to right and left the road stretched away, desolate and blindingly white in the fierce sunshine. A second report was heard, and stillnothing to be seen, not even so much as a shadow; but, just as he was turning to reënter, he chanced to look over toward Gagny, and there beheld a little puff of smoke, floating away on the tranquil air, like thistle-down. The deep peace of the forest was apparently unbroken.

"The rascals have occupied the wood," the officer murmured. "They know we are here."

Then the firing went on, and became more and more continuous, between the French soldiers posted about the mill and the Prussians concealed among the trees. The bullets whistled over the Morelle without doing any mischief on either side. The firing was irregular; every bush seemed to have its marksmen, and nothing was to be seen save those bluish smoke-wreaths that hung for a moment on the wind before they vanished. It lasted thus for nearly two hours. The officers hummed a tune with a careless air. Françoise and Dominique, who had remained in the courtyard, raised themselves to look out over a low wall. They were more particularly interested in a little soldier who had his post on the bank of the Morelle, behind the hull of an old boat; he would lie face downward on the ground, watch his chance, deliver his fire, then slip back into a ditch a few steps in his rear to reload, and his movements were so comical, he displayed such cunning and activity, that it was difficult for any one watching him to refrain from smiling. He must have caught sight of a Prussian, for he rose quickly and brought his piece to the shoulder, but, before he could discharge it, he uttered a loud cry, whirled completely around in his tracks, and fell backward into the ditch, where for an instant his legs moved convulsively, just as the claws of a fowl do when it is beheaded. The little soldier had received a bullet directly through his heart. It was the first casualty of the day

Françoise instinctively seized Dominique's hand, and held it tight in a convulsive grasp.

"Come away from there," said the captain. "The bullets reach us here."

As to confirm his words, a slight, sharp sound was heard up in the old elm, and the end of a branch came to the ground, turning over and over as it fell; but the two young people never stirred, riveted to the spot as they were by the interest of the spectacle. On the edge of the wood, a Prussian had suddenly emerged from behind a tree, as an actor comes upon the stage from the wings, beating the air with his arms and falling over upon his back. And beyond that there was no movement; the two dead men appeared to be sleeping in the bright sunshine; there was not a soul to be seen in the fields on which the heat lay heavy. Even the sharp rattle of the musketry had ceased. Only the Morelle kept on whispering to itself with its low, musical murmur.

Father Merlier looked at the captain with an astonished air, as if to inquire whether that were the end of it.

"Here comes their attack," the officer murmured. "Look out for yourselves! Don't stand there!"

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when a terrible discharge of musketry ensued. The great elm was riddled; its leaves came eddying

down as thick as snowflakes. Fortunately, the Prussians had aimed too high. Dominique dragged, almost carried Françoise from the spot, while Father Melier followed them, shouting:

"Get into the small cellar; the walls are thicker there."

But they paid no attention to him; they made their way to the main hall, where ten or a dozen soldiers were silently waiting, watching events outside through the chinks of the closed shutters. The captain was left alone in the courtyard, where he sheltered himself behind the low wall, while the furious fire was maintained uninterruptedly. The soldiers whom he had posted outside only yielded their ground inch by inch; they came crawling in, however, one after another, as the enemy dislodged them from their positions. Their instructions were to gain all the time they could, taking care not to show themselves, in order that the Prussians might remain in igno rance of the force they had opposed to them. Another hour passed, and, as a sergeant came in, reporting that there were now only two or three men left outside, the officer took his watch from his pocket, murmuring:

"Half-past two. Come, we must hold out for four hours yet."

He caused the great gate of the courtyard to be tightly secured, and everything was made ready for an energetic defence. The Prussians were

on the other side of the Morelle; consequently, there was no reason to fear an assault at the moment. There was a bridge, indeed, a mile and a quarter away, but they were probably unaware of its existence, and it was hardly to be supposed that they would attempt to cross the stream by fording. The officer, therefore, simply caused the road to be watched; the attack, when it came, was to be looked for from the direction of the field.

The firing had ceased again. The mill appeared to lie there in the sunlight, void of all life. Not a shutter was open; not a sound came from within. Gradually, however, the Prussians began to show themselves at the edge of Gagny wood. Heads were protruded here and there; they seemed to be mustering up their courage. Several of the soldiers within the mill brought up their pieces to an aim, but the captain shouted:

"No, no; not yet; wait. Let them come nearer."

They displayed a great deal of prudence in their advance, looking at the mill with a distrustful air; they seemed hardly to know what to make of the old structure, so lifeless and gloomy, with its curtains of ivy. Still, they kept on advancing. When there were fifty of them or so in the open, directly opposite, the officer uttered one word:

"Now!"

A crashing, tearing discharge burst from the

position, succeeded by an irregular, dropping fire. Françoise, trembling violently, involuntarily raised her hands to her ears. Dominique, from his position behind the soldiers, peered out upon the field, and when the smoke drifted away a little, counted three Prussians extended on their backs in the middle of the meadow. The others had sought shelter among the willows and the poplars. And then commenced the siege.

For more than an hour the mill was riddled with bullets; they beat and rattled on its old walls like hail. The noise they made was plainly audible as they struck the stonework, were flattened, and fell back into the water; they buried themselves in the woodwork with a dull thud. Occasionally a creaking sound would announce that the wheel had been hit. Within the building, the soldiers husbanded their ammunition, firing only when they could see something to aim at. The captain kept consulting his watch every few minutes, and, as a ball split one of the shutters in halves, and then lodged in the ceiling:

"Four o'clock," he murmured. "We shall never be able to hold the position."

The old mill, in truth, was gradually going to pieces beneath that terrific fire. A shutter that had been perforated again and again until it looked like a piece of lace, fell off its hinges into the water, and had to be replaced by a mattress. Every moment, almost, Father Merlier exposed himself to the fire in order to take account of the damage sustained by his poor wheel, every wound

of which was like a bullet in his own heart. Its period of usefulness was ended this time, for certain; he would never be able to patch it up again. Dominique had besought Françoise to retire to a place of safety, but she was determined to remain with him; she had taken a seat behind a great oaken clothes-press, which afforded her protection. A ball struck the press, however, the sides of which gave out a dull, hollow sound, whereupon Dominique stationed himself in front of Françoise. He had as yet taken no part in the firing, although he had his rifle in his hand; the soldiers occupied the whole breadth of the windows, so that he could not get near them. At every discharge, the floor trembled.

"Look out! look out!" the captain suddenly shouted.

He had just descried a dark mass emerging from the wood. As soon as they gained the open, they set up a telling platoon fire. It struck the mill like a tornado. Another shutter parted company, and the bullets came whistling in through the yawning aperture. Two soldiers rolled upon the floor; one lay where he fell, and never moved a limb; his comrades pushed him up against the wall because he was in their way. The other writhed and twisted, beseeching some one to end his agony, but no one had ears for the poor wretch; the bullets were still pouring in, and every one was looking out for himself and searching for a loophole whence he might answer the enemy's fire. A third soldier was wounded;

that one said not a word, but with staring, haggard eyes sank down beneath a table. Françoise, horror-stricken by the dreadful spectacle of the dead and dying men, mechanically pushed away her chair and seated herself on the floor, against the wall; it seemed to her that she would be smaller there and less exposed In the meantime, men had gone and secured all the mattresses in the house; the opening of the window was partially closed again. The hall was filled with débris of every description, broken weapons, dislocated furniture.

"Five o'clock," said the captain. "Stand fast, boys. They are going to make an attempt to pass the stream."

Just then Françoise gave a shriek. A bullet had struck the floor, and, rebounding, grazed her forehead on the ricochet. A few drops of blood appeared. Dominique looked at her, then went to the window and fired his first shot, and, from that time, kept on firing uninterruptedly. He kept on loading and discharging his piece mechanically, paying no attention to what was passing at his side, only pausing from time to time to cast a look at Françoise. He did not fire hurriedly or at random, moreover, but took deliberate aim. As the captain had predicted, the Prussians were skirting the belt of poplars and attempting the passage of the Morelle, but each time that one of them showed himself he fell with one of Dominique's bullets in his brain. The captain, who was watching the performance, was amazed;

he complimented the young man, telling him that he would like to have many more marksmen of his skill. Dominique did not hear a word he said. A ball struck him in the shoulder; another raised a contusion on his arm. And still he kept on firing.

There were two more deaths. The mattresses were torn to shreds, and no longer availed to stop the windows. The last volley that was poured in seemed as if it would carry away the mill bodily, so fierce it was. The position was no longer tenable. Still, the officer kept repeating:

"Stand fast. Another half-hour yet."

He was counting the minutes, one by one, now. He had promised his commanders that he would hold the enemy there until nightfall, and he would not budge a hair's breadth before the moment that he had fixed on for his withdrawal. He maintained his pleasant air of good-humour, smiling at Françoise by way of reassuring her. He had picked up the musket of one of the dead soldiers, and was firing away with the rest.

There were but four soldiers left in the room. The Prussians were showing themselves *en masse* on the other bank of the Morelle, and it was evident that they might now pass the stream at any moment. A few moments more elapsed; the captain was as determined as ever, and would not give the order to retreat, when a sergeant came running into the room, saying:

"They are on the road; they are going to take us in the rear."

The Prussians must have discovered the bridge. The captain drew out his watch again.

"Five minutes more," he said. "They won't be here within five minutes."

Then exactly at six o'clock, he at last withdrew his men through a little postern that opened on a narrow lane, whence they threw themselves into the ditch, and in that way reached the forest of Sauval. The captain took leave of Father Merlier with much politeness, apologising profusely for the trouble he had caused. He even added:

"Try to keep them occupied for a while. We shall return."

While this was occurring, Dominique had remained alone in the hall. He was still firing away, hearing nothing, conscious of nothing; his sole thought was to defend Françoise. The soldiers were all gone, and he had not the remotest idea of the fact; he aimed, and brought down his man at every shot. All at once there was a great tumult. The Prussians had entered the courtyard from the rear. He fired his last shot, and they fell upon him with his weapon still smoking in his hand.

It required four men to hold him; the rest of them swarmed about him, vociferating like madmen in their horrible dialect. Françoise rushed forward to intercede with her prayers. They were on the point of killing him on the spot, but an officer came in and made them turn the prisoner over to him. After exchanging a few

words in German with his men, he turned to Dominique and said to him roughly, in very good French:

"You will be shot in two hours from now."

III

It was the standing regulation, laid down by the German staff, that every Frenchman, not belonging to the regular army, taken with arms in his hands, should be shot. Even the *compagnies franches* were not recognised as belligerents. It was the intention of the Germans, in making such terrible examples of the peasants who attempted to defend their firesides, to prevent a rising *en masse*, which they greatly dreaded.

The officer, a tall, spare man about fifty years old, subjected Dominique to a brief examination. Although he spoke French fluently, he was unmistakably Prussian in the stiffness of his manner.

"You are a native of this country?"

"No; I am a Belgian."

"Why did you take up arms? These are matters with which you have no concern."

Dominique made no reply. At this moment the officer caught sight of Françoise where she stood listening, very pale; her slight wound had marked her white forehead with a streak of red. He looked from one to the other of the young people, and appeared to understand the situation; he merely added:

"You do not deny having fired on my men?"

"I fired as long as I was able to do so," Dominique quietly replied.

The admission was scarcely necessary, for he was black with powder, wet with sweat, and the blood from the wound in his shoulder had trickled down and stained his clothing.

"Very well," the officer repeated. "You will be shot two hours hence."

Françoise uttered no cry. She clasped her hands, and raised them above her head in a gesture of mute despair. Her action was not lost upon the officer. Two soldiers had led Dominique away to an adjacent room, where their orders were to guard him and not lose sight of him. The girl had sunk upon a chair; her strength had failed her, her legs refused to support her; she was denied the relief of tears—it seemed as if her emotion was strangling her. The officer continued to examine her attentively, and finally addressed her:

"Is that young man your brother?" he inquired.

She shook her head in negation. He was as rigid and unbending as ever, without the suspicion of a smile on his face. Then, after an interval of silence, he spoke again:

"Has he been living in the neighbourhood long?"

She answered yes, by another motion of the head.

"Then he must be well acquainted with the woods about here?"

This time she made a verbal answer. "Yes, sir," she said, looking at him with some astonishment.

He said nothing more, but turned on his heel, requesting that the mayor of the village should be brought before him. But Françoise had risen from her chair, a faint tinge of colour on her cheeks, believing that she had caught the significance of his questions, and, with renewed hope, she ran off to look for her father.

As soon as the firing had ceased, Father Merlier had hurriedly descended by the wooden gallery to have a look at his wheel. He adored his daughter, and had a strong feeling of affection for Dominique, his son-in-law who was to be; but his wheel also occupied a large space in his heart. Now that the two little ones, as he called them, had come safe and sound out of the fray, he thought of his other love, which must have suffered sorely, poor thing; and bending over the great wooden skeleton, he was scrutinising its wounds with a heartbroken air. Five of the buckets were reduced to splinters; the central framework was honeycombed. He was thrusting his fingers into the cavities that the bullets had made, to see how deep they were, and reflecting how he was ever to repair all that damage. When Françoise found him, he was already plugging up the crevices with moss and such débris as he could lay hands on.

"They are asking for you, father," said she.

And at last she wept as she told him what she had just heard. Father Merlier shook his head. It was not customary to shoot people like that. He would have to look into the matter. And he re-entered the mill with his usual placid, silent air. When the officer made his demand for supplies for his men, he answered that the people of Rocreuse were not accustomed to be ridden roughshod, and that nothing would be obtained from them through violence; he was willing to assume all the responsibility, but only on condition that he was allowed to act independently. The officer at first appeared to take umbrage at this easy way of viewing matters, but finally gave way before the old man's brief and distinct representations. As the latter was leaving the room, the other recalled him to ask:

"Those woods there, opposite, what do you call them?"

"The woods of Sauval."

"And how far do they extend?"

The miller looked him straight in the face. "I do not know," he replied.

And he withdrew. An hour later, the subvention in money and provisions that the officer had demanded was in the courtyard of the mill. Night was closing in; Françoise followed every movement of the soldiers with an anxious eye. She never once left the vicinity of the room in which Dominique was imprisoned. About seven o'clock, she had a harrowing emotion; she saw

the officer enter the prisoner's apartment, and for a quarter of an hour heard their voices raised in violent discussion. The officer came to the door for a moment, and gave an order in German which she did not understand, but when twelve men came and formed in the courtyard with shouldered muskets she was seized with a fit of trembling, and felt as if she should die. It was all over, then; the execution was about to take place. The twelve men remained there ten minutes; Dominique's voice kept rising higher and higher in a tone of vehement denial. Finally, the officer came out, closing the door behind him with a vicious bang, and saying:

"Very well; think it over. I give you until to-morrow morning."

And he ordered the twelve men to break ranks by a motion of his hand. Françoise was stupefied. Father Merlier, who had continued to puff away at his pipe while watching the platoon with a simple, curious air, came and took her by the arm with fatherly gentleness. He led her to her chamber.

"Don't fret," he said to her; "try to get some sleep. To-morrow it will be light, and we shall see more clearly."

He locked the door behind him as he left the room. It was a fixed principle with him that women are good for nothing, and that they spoil everything whenever they meddle in important matters. Françoise did not retire to her couch, however; she remained a long time seated on her

bed, listening to the various noises in the house. The German soldiers quartered in the courtyard were singing and laughing; they must have kept up their eating and drinking until eleven o'clock, for the riot never ceased for an instant. Heavy footsteps resounded from time to time through the mill itself; doubtless, the tramp of the guards as they were relieved. What had most interest for her was the sounds that she could catch in the room that lay directly under her own; several times she threw herself prone upon the floor and applied her ear to the boards. That room was the one in which they had locked up Dominique. He must have been pacing the apartment, for she could hear for a long time his regular, cadenced tread passing from the wall to the window and back again; then there was a deep silence; doubtless, he had seated himself. The other sounds ceased, too; everything was still. When it seemed to her that the house was sunk in slumber, she raised her window as noiselessly as possible, and leaned out.

Without, the night was serene and balmy. The slender crescent of the moon, which was just setting behind Sauval wood, cast a dim radiance over the landscape. The lengthening shadows of the great trees stretched far athwart the fields in bands of blackness, while in such spots as were unobscured the grass appeared of a tender green, soft as velvet. But Françoise did not stop to consider the mysterious charm of night. She was scrutinising the country and looking to see

where the Germans had posted their sentinels. She could clearly distinguish their dark forms outlined along the course of the Morelle. There was only one stationed opposite the mill, on the far bank of the stream, by a willow whose branches dipped in the water. Françoise had an excellent view of him; he was a tall young man, standing quite motionless with face upturned toward the sky, with the meditative air of a shepherd.

When she had completed her careful inspection of localities, she returned, and took her former seat upon the bed. She remained there an hour, absorbed in deep thought. Then she listened again; there was not a breath to be heard in the house. She went again to the window, and took another look outside; but one of the moon's horns was still hanging above the edge of the forest, and this circumstance, doubtless, appeared to her unpropitious, for she resumed her waiting. At last the moment seemed to have arrived; the night was now quite dark; she could no longer discern the sentinel opposite her, the landscape lay before her black as a sea of ink. She listened intently for a moment, then formed her resolve. Close beside her window was an iron ladder made of bars set in the wall, which ascended from the mill-wheel to the granary at the top of the building and had formerly served the miller as a means of inspecting certain portions of the gearing, but, a change having been made in the machinery, the ladder had long since become lost to sight

beneath the thick ivy that covered all that side of the mill.

Françoise bravely climbed over the balustrade of the little balcony in front of her window, grasped one of the iron bars, and found herself suspended in space. She commenced the descent; her skirts were a great hindrance to her. Suddenly, a stone became loosened from the wall, and fell into the Morelle with a loud splash. She stopped, benumbed with fear, but reflection quickly told her that the waterfall, with its continuous roar, was sufficient to deaden any noise that she could make, and then she descended more boldly, putting aside the ivy with her foot, testing each round of her ladder. When she was on a level with the room that had been converted into a prison for her lover, she stopped. An unforeseen difficulty came near depriving her of all her courage: the window of the room beneath was not situated directly under the window of her bedroom; there was a wide space between it and the ladder, and when she extended her hand it only encountered the naked wall.

Would she have to go back the way she came, and leave her project unaccomplished? Her arms were growing very tired; the murmuring of the Morelle, far down below, was beginning to make her dizzy. Then she broke off bits of plaster from the wall, and threw them against Dominique's window. He did not hear; perhaps he was asleep. Again she crumbled fragments from the wall, until the skin was peeled

from her fingers. Her strength was exhausted, she felt that she was about to fall backward into the stream, when at last Dominique softly raised his sash.

"It is I," she murmured. "Take me quick; I am about to fall." Leaning from the window, he grasped her and drew her into the room, where she had a paroxysm of weeping, stifling her sobs in order that she might not be heard. Then, by a supreme effort of the will, she overcame her emotion.

"Are you guarded?" she asked, in a low voice.

Dominique, not yet recovered from his stupefaction at seeing her there, made answer by simply pointing toward his door. There was a sound of snoring audible on the outside; it was evident that the sentinel had been overpowered by sleep and had thrown himself upon the floor close against the door in such a way that it could not be opened without arousing him.

"You must fly," she continued earnestly; "I came here to bid you fly and say farewell."

But he seemed not to hear her. He kept repeating:

"What, is it you, is it you? Oh, what a fright you gave me! You might have killed yourself." He took her hands; he kissed them again and again. "How I love you, Françoise! You are as courageous as you are good. The only thing I feared was that I might die without seeing you again, but you are here, and now they may shoot

me when they will. Let me but have a quarter of an hour with you, and I am ready."

He had gradually drawn her to him; her head was resting on his shoulder. The peril that was so near at hand brought them closer to each other, and they forgot everything in that long embrace.

"Ah, Françoise!" Dominique went on in low, caressing tones, "to-day is the fête of Saint Louis, our wedding-day, that we have been waiting for so long. Nothing has been able to keep us apart, for we are both here, faithful to our appointment, are we not? It is now our wedding morning."

"Yes, yes," she repeated after him, "our wedding morning."

They shuddered as they exchanged a kiss. But suddenly she tore herself from his arms; the terrible reality arose before her eyes.

"You must fly; you must fly," she murmured breathlessly. "There is not a moment to lose." And as he stretched out his arms in the darkness to draw her to him again, she went on in tender, beseeching tones: "Oh! listen to me, I entreat you. If you die, I shall die. In an hour it will be daylight. Go; go at once; I command you to go."

Then she rapidly explained her plan to him. The iron ladder extended downward to the wheel; once he had got that far he could climb down by means of the buckets and get into the boat, which was hidden in a recess. Then it would be an easy matter for him to reach the other bank of the stream and make his escape.

"But are there no sentinels?" said he.

"Only one, directly opposite here, at the foot of the first willow."

"And if he sees me—if he gives the alarm?"

Françoise shuddered. She placed in his hand a knife that she had brought down with her. They were silent.

"And your father—and you?" Dominique continued. "But no, it is not to be thought of; I must not fly. When I am no longer here, those soldiers are capable of murdering you. You do not know them. They offered to spare my life if I would guide them into Sauval forest. When they discover that I have escaped, their fury will be such that they will be ready for every atrocity."

The girl did not stop to argue the question. To all the considerations that he adduced, her one simple answer was: "Fly. For love of me, fly. If you love me, Dominique, do not linger here a single moment longer."

She promised that she would return to her bedroom; no one should know that she had assisted him. She concluded by folding him in her arms and smothering him with kisses in an extravagant outburst of passion. He was vanquished. He put only one more question to her:

"Will you swear to me that your father knows what you are doing, and that he counsels my flight?"

"It was my father who sent me to you," Françoise unhesitatingly replied.

She told a falsehood. At that moment, she had but one great, overmastering longing—to know that he was in safety, to escape from the horrible thought that the morning's sun was to be the signal for his death. When he should be far away, then calamity and evil might burst upon her head; whatever fate might be in store for her would seem endurable, so that only his life might be spared. Before and above all other considerations, the selfishness of her love demanded that he should be saved.

"It is well," said Dominique; "I will do as you desire."

No further word was spoken. Dominique went to the window to raise it again. But, suddenly, there was a noise that chilled them with affright. The door was shaken violently; they thought that some one was about to open it; it was evidently a party going the rounds who had heard their voices. They stood by the window, close locked in each other's arms, awaiting the event with anguish unspeakable. Again there came the rattling at the door, but it did not open. Each of them drew a deep sigh of relief; they saw how it was: the soldier lying across the threshold had turned over in his sleep. Silence was restored, indeed, and presently the snoring commenced again, sounding like sweetest music in their ears.

Dominique insisted that Françoise should return to her room first of all. He took her in his arms, he bade her a silent farewell, then assisted her to grasp the ladder, and himself climbed out

on it in turn. He refused to descend a single step, however, until he knew that she was in her chamber. When she was safe in her room, she let fall, in a voice scarce louder than the whispering breeze, the words:

"*Au revoir*, I love you!"

She kneeled at the window, resting her elbows on the sill, straining her eyes to follow Dominique. The night was still very dark. She looked for the sentinel, but could see nothing of him; the willow alone was dimly visible, a pale spot upon the surrounding blackness. For a moment, she heard the rustling of the ivy as Dominique descended, then the wheel creaked, and there was a faint plash which told that the young man had found the boat. This was confirmed when, a minute later, she descried the shadowy outline of the skiff on the gray bosom of the Morelle. Then a horrible feeling of dread seemed to clutch her by the throat and deprive her of power to breathe; she momently expected to hear the sentry give the alarm; every faintest sound among the dusky shadows seemed to her overwrought imagination to be the hurrying tread of soldiers, the clash of steel, the click of musket-locks. The seconds slipped by, however; the landscape still preserved its solemn peace. Dominique must have landed safely on the other bank. Françoise no longer had eyes for anything. The silence was oppressive. And she heard the sound of trampling feet, a hoarse cry, the dull thud of a heavy body falling. This was

followed by another silence, even deeper than that which had gone before. Then, as if conscious that Death had passed that way, she became very cold in presence of the impenetrable night.

IV

At early daybreak, the repose of the mill was disturbed by the clamour of angry voices. Father Merlier had gone and unlocked Françoise's door. She descended to the courtyard, pale and very calm, but when there could not repress a shudder upon being brought face to face with the body of a Prussian soldier that lay on the ground beside the well, stretched out upon a cloak.

Soldiers were shouting and gesticulating angrily about the corpse. Several of them shook their fists threateningly in the direction of the village. The officer had just sent a summons to Father Merlier to appear before him in his capacity as mayor of the commune.

"Here is one of our men," he said, in a voice that was almost unintelligible from anger, "who was found murdered on the bank of the stream. The murderer must be found, so that we may make a salutary example of him, and I shall expect you to coöperate with us in finding him."

"Whatever you desire," the miller replied, with his customary impassiveness. "Only, it will be no easy matter."

The officer stooped down and drew aside the skirt of the cloak which concealed the dead man's

face, disclosing, as he did so, a frightful wound. The sentinel had been struck in the throat, and the weapon had not been withdrawn from the wound. It was a common kitchen-knife, with a black handle.

"Look at that knife," the officer said to Father Merlier. "Perhaps it will assist us in our investigation."

The old man had started violently, but recovered himself at once; not a muscle of his face moved as he replied:

"Every one about here has knives like that. Like enough, your man was tired of fighting, and did the business himself. Such things have happened before now."

"Be silent!" the officer shouted in a fury. "I don't know what it is that keeps me from applying the torch to the four corners of your village."

His rage fortunately kept him from noticing the great change that had come over Françoise's countenance. Her feelings had compelled her to sit down upon the stone bench beside the well. Do what she would, she could not remove her eyes from the body that lay stretched upon the ground, almost at her feet. He had been a tall, handsome young man in life, very like Dominique in appearance, with blue eyes and golden hair. The resemblance went to her heart. She thought that, perhaps, the dead man had left behind him in his German home some loved one who would weep for his loss. And she recognised her knife in the dead man's throat. She had killed him.

The officer, meantime, was talking of visiting Rocreuse with some terrible punishment, when two or three soldiers came running in. The guard had just that moment ascertained the fact of Dominique's escape. The agitation caused by the tidings was extreme. The officer went to inspect the locality, looked out through the still open window, saw at once how the event had happened, and returned in a state of exasperation.

Father Merlier appeared greatly vexed by Dominique's flight. "The idiot!" he murmured; "he has upset everything."

Françoise heard him, and was in an agony of suffering. Her father, moreover, had no suspicion of her complicity. He shook his head, saying to her in an undertone :

"We are in a nice box, now!"

"It was that scoundrel! it was that scoundrel!" cried the officer. "He has got away to the woods; but he must be found, or, by ——, the village shall stand the consequences." And, addressing himself to the miller, "Come, you must know where he is hiding?"

Father Merlier laughed in his silent way, and pointed to the wide stretch of wooded hills.

"How can you expect to find a man in that wilderness?" he asked.

"Oh! there are plenty of hiding-places that you are acquainted with. I am going to give you ten men; you shall act as guide to them."

"I am perfectly willing. But it will take a week to beat up all the woods of the neighbourhood."

The old man's serenity enraged the officer; he saw, indeed, what a ridiculous proceeding such a hunt would be. It was at that moment that he caught sight of Françoise where she sat, pale and trembling, on her bench. His attention was aroused by the girl's anxious attitude. He was silent for a moment, glancing suspiciously from father to daughter and back again.

"Is not this fellow," he at last coarsely asked the old man, "your daughter's lover?"

Father Merlier's face became ashy pale, and he appeared for a moment as if about to throw himself on the officer and throttle him. But he straightened himself up, and made no reply. Françoise had hidden her face in her hands.

"Yes, that is how it is," the Prussian continued; "you or your daughter have assisted him to escape. You are his accomplices. For the last time—will you surrender him?"

The miller did not answer. He had turned away, and was looking at the distant landscape with an air of supreme indifference, just as if the officer were talking to some other person. That put the finishing touch to the latter's wrath.

"Very well, then!" he declared, "you shall be shot in his stead."

And again he ordered out the firing-party. Father Merlier was as imperturbable as ever. He scarcely did so much as shrug his shoulders; the whole drama appeared to him to be very doubtful taste. He probably believed that they would not take a man's life in that unceremonious

manner. When the platoon was on the ground, he gravely said:

"So, then, you are in earnest? Very well, I am willing it should be so. If you feel you must have a victim, it may as well be I as another."

But Françoise arose, greatly troubled, stammering: "Have mercy, good sir; do not harm my father. Take my life instead of his. It was I who assisted Dominique to escape; I am the only guilty one."

"Hold your tongue, my girl," Father Merlier exclaimed. "Why do you tell such a falsehood? She passed the night locked in her room, monsieur; I assure you that she does not speak the truth."

"I *am* speaking the truth," the girl eagerly replied. "I left my room by the window; I incited Dominique to fly. It is the truth, the whole truth."

The old man's face was very white. He could read in her eyes that she was not lying, and her story terrified him. Ah, those children, those children! how they spoiled everything, with their hearts and their feelings! Then he said angrily:

"She is crazy; do not listen to her. It is a lot of trash she is giving you. Come, let us get through with this business."

She persisted in her protestations; she kneeled, she raised her clasped hands in supplication. The officer stood tranquilly by and watched the harrowing scene.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he said at last, "I take your

father because the other has escaped me. Bring me back the other man and your father shall have his liberty."

She looked at him for a moment with eyes dilated by the horror which his proposal inspired in her.

"It is dreadful," she murmured. "Where can I look for Dominique now? He is gone; I know nothing beyond that."

"Well, make your choice between them; him or your father."

"Oh! my God! how can I choose? Even if I knew where to find Dominique, I could not choose. You are breaking my heart. I would rather die at once. Yes, it would be more quickly ended thus. Kill me, I beseech you; kill me——"

The officer finally became weary of this scene of despair and tears. He cried:

"Enough of this! I wish to treat you kindly; I will give you two hours. If your lover is not here within two hours, your father shall pay the penalty that he has incurred."

And he ordered Father Merlier away to the room that had served as a prison for Dominique. The old man asked for tobacco, and began to smoke. There was no trace of emotion to be descried on his impassive face. Only, when he was alone, he wept two big tears that coursed slowly down his cheeks as he smoked his solitary pipe. His poor, dear child, what a fearful trial she was enduring!

Françoise remained in the courtyard. Prussian

soldiers passed back and forth, laughing. Some of them addressed her with coarse pleasantries which she did not understand. Her gaze was bent upon the door through which her father had disappeared, and, with a slow movement, she raised her hand to her forehead, as if to keep it from bursting. The officer turned sharply, and said to her:

"You have two hours. Try to make good use of them."

She had two hours. The words kept buzzing, buzzing in her ears. Then she went forth mechanically from the courtyard; she walked straight ahead with no definite end. Where was she to go? what was she to do? She did not even endeavour to arrive at any decision, for she felt how utterly useless were her efforts. And yet she would have liked to see Dominique; they could have come to some understanding together; perhaps they might have hit on some plan to extricate them from their difficulties. And so, amid the confusion of her whirling thoughts, she took her way downward to the bank of the Morelle, which she crossed below the dam by means of some stepping-stones which were there. Proceeding onward, still involuntarily, she came to the first willow, at the corner of the meadow, and, stooping down, beheld a sight that made her grow deathly pale—a pool of blood. It was the spot. And she followed the trace that Dominique had left in the tall grass; it was evident that he had run, for the footsteps that crossed the

meadow in the diagonal line were separated from one another by wide intervals. Then, beyond that point, she lost the trace, but thought she had discovered it again in an adjoining field. It led her onward to the border of the forest, where the trail came abruptly to an end.

Though conscious of the futility of the proceeding, Françoise penetrated into the wood. It was a comfort to her to be alone. She sat down for a moment; then, reflecting that time was passing, rose again to her feet. How long was it since she left the mill? Five minutes? or a half-hour? She had lost all idea of time. Perhaps Dominique had sought concealment in a clearing that she knew of, where they had gone together one afternoon and eaten hazelnuts. She directed her steps toward the clearing; she searched it thoroughly. A blackbird flew out, whistling his sweet and melancholy note; that was all. Then she thought that he might have taken refuge in a hollow among the rocks where he went sometimes with his gun to secure a bird or a rabbit; but the spot was untenanted. What use was there in looking for him? She would never find him, and, little by little, the desire to discover his hiding-place became a passionate longing. She proceeded at a more rapid pace. The idea suddenly took possession of her that he had climbed into a tree, and thenceforth she went along with eyes raised aloft, and called him by name every fifteen or twenty steps, so that he might know she was near him. The cuckoos answered her;

a breath of air that rustled the leaves made her think that he was there, and was coming down to her. Once she even imagined that she saw him; she stopped, with a sense of suffocation, with a desire to run away. What was she to say to him? Had she come there to take him back with her, and have him shot? Oh, no! she would not mention those things; she would tell him that he must fly, that he must not remain in the neighbourhood. Then she thought of her father, awaiting her return, and the reflection caused her most bitter anguish. She sank upon the turf, weeping hot tears, crying aloud:

"My God! My God! Why am I here?"

It was a mad thing for her to have come. And, as if seized with sudden panic, she ran hither and thither, seeking to make her way out of the forest. Three times she lost her way, and had begun to think she was never to see the mill again, when she came out into a meadow, directly opposite Rocreuse. As soon as she caught sight of the village, she stopped. Was she going to return alone?

She was standing there when she heard a voice calling her by name, softly:

"Françoise! Françoise!"

And she beheld Dominique, raising his head above the edge of a ditch. Just God! she had found him!

Could it be, then, that heaven willed his death? She suppressed a cry that rose to her lips, and slipped into the ditch beside him.

"You were looking for me?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied, bewildered, scarce knowing what she was saying.

"Ah! what has happened?"

She stammered, with eyes downcast, "Why, nothing; I was anxious; I wanted to see you."

Thereupon, his fears alleviated, he went on to tell her how it was that he had remained in the vicinity. He was alarmed for them. Those rascally Prussians were not above wreaking their vengeance on women and old men. All had ended well, however, and he added, laughing:

"The wedding will be deferred for a week, that's all."

He became serious, however, upon noticing that her dejection did not pass away.

"But what is the matter? You are concealing something from me."

"No, I give you my word I am not. I am tired; I ran all the way here."

He kissed her, saying it was imprudent for them both to remain there longer, and was about to climb out of the ditch in order to return to the forest. She stopped him; she was trembling violently.

"Listen, Dominique; perhaps it will be as well for you to remain here, after all. There is no one looking for you; you have nothing to fear."

"Françoise, you are concealing something from me," he said again.

Again she protested that she was concealing nothing. She only liked to know that he was

near her. And there were other reasons still that she gave in stammering accents. Her manner was so strange that no consideration could now have induced him to go away. He believed, moreover, that the French would return presently. Troops had been seen over toward Sauval.

"Ah! let them make haste; let them come as quickly as possible," she murmured fervently.

At that moment, the clock of the church at Rocreuse struck eleven; the strokes reached them, clear and distinct. She arose in terror; it was two hours since she had left the mill.

"Listen," she said, with feverish rapidity, "should we need you, I will go up to my room and wave my handkerchief from the window."

And she started off homeward on a run, while Dominique, greatly disturbed in mind, stretched himself at length beside the ditch to watch the mill. Just as she was about to enter the village, Françoise encountered an old beggarman, Father Bontemps, who knew every one and everything in that part of the country. He saluted her; he had just seen the miller, he said, surrounded by a crowd of Prussians; then, making numerous signs of the cross and mumbling some inarticulate words, he went his way.

"The two hours are up," the officer said, when Françoise made her appearance.

Father Merlier was there, seated on the bench beside the well. He was smoking still. The young girl again proffered her supplication, kneel-

ing before the officer and weeping. Her wish was to gain time. The hope that she might yet behold the return of the French had been gaining strength in her bosom, and amid her tears and sobs she thought she could distinguish in the distance the cadenced tramp of an advancing army. Oh! if they would but come, and deliver them all from their fearful trouble!

"Hear me, sir; grant us an hour—just one little hour. Surely, you will not refuse to grant us an hour!"

But the officer was inflexible. He even ordered two men to lay hold of her and take her away, in order that they might proceed undisturbed with the execution of the old man. Then a dreadful conflict took place in Françoise's heart. She could not allow her father to be murdered in that manner; no, no, she would die in company with Dominique rather, and she was just darting away in the direction of her room in order to signal her *fiancé*, when Dominique himself entered the courtyard.

The officer and his soldiers gave a great shout of triumph, but he, as if there had been no soul there but Françoise, walked straight up to her; he was perfectly calm, and his face wore a slight expression of sternness.

"You did wrong," he said. "Why did you not bring me back with you? Had it not been for Father Bontemps, I should have known nothing of all this. Well, I am here, at all events."

V

It was three o'clock. The heavens were piled high with great black clouds, the tail-end of a storm that had been raging somewhere in the vicinity. Beneath the coppery sky and ragged scud, the valley of Rocreuse, so bright and shining in the sunlight, became a grim chasm full of sinister shadows. The Prussian officer had done nothing with Dominique beyond placing him in confinement, giving no indication of his ultimate purpose in regard to him. Françoise, since noon, had been suffering unendurable agony; notwithstanding her father's entreaties, she would not leave the courtyard. She was waiting for the French troops to appear, but the hours slipped by, night was approaching, and she suffered all the more since it appeared as if the time thus gained would have no effect on the final result.

About three o'clock, however, the Prussians began to make their preparations for departure. The officer had gone to Dominique's room, and remained closeted with him for some minutes, as he had done the day before. Françoise knew that the young man's life was hanging in the balance; she clasped her hands, and put up fervent prayers. Beside her sat Father Merlier, rigid and silent, declining, like the true peasant he was to attempt any interference with accomplished facts.

"Oh! my God! my God!" Françoise exclaimed, "they are going to kill him!"

The miller drew her to him, and took her on his lap as if she had been a little child. At this juncture, the officer came from the room, followed by two men conducting Dominique between them.

"Never, never!" the latter exclaimed. "I am ready to die."

"You had better think the matter over," the officer replied. "I shall have no trouble in finding some one else to render us the service which you refuse. I am generous with you; I offer you your life. It is simply a matter of guiding us across the forest to Montredon; there must be paths."

Dominique made no answer.

"Then you persist in your obstinacy?"

"Shoot me, and have done with the matter," he replied.

Françoise, in the distance, entreated her lover with clasped hands; she was forgetful of all considerations save one—she would have had him commit a treason. But Father Merlier seized her hands that the Prussians might not see the wild gestures of a woman whose mind was disordered by her distress.

"He is right," he murmured; "it is best for him to die."

The firing party was in readiness. The officer still had hopes of bringing Dominique over, and was waiting to see him exhibit some signs of weakness. Deep silence prevailed. Heavy peals of thunder were heard in the distance; the fields and woods lay lifeless beneath the swelter-

ing heat. And it was in the midst of this oppressive silence that suddenly the cry arose:

"The French! the French!"

It was a fact; they were coming. The line of red trousers could be seen advancing along the Sauval road, at the edge of the forest. In the mill, the confusion was extreme; the Prussian soldiers ran to and fro, giving vent to guttural cries. Not a shot had been fired as yet.

"The French! the French!" cried Françoise, clapping her hands for joy. She was like a woman possessed. She had escaped from her father's embrace, and was laughing boisterously, her arms raised high in the air. They had come at last, then, and had come in time, since Dominique was still there, alive!

A crash of musketry that rang in her ears like a thunder-clap caused her to suddenly turn her head. The officer had muttered, "We will finish this business first," and, with his own hands pushing Dominique up against the wall of a shed, had given the command to the squad to fire. When Françoise turned, Dominique was lying on the ground, pierced by a dozen bullets.

She did not shed a tear; she stood there like one suddenly rendered senseless. Her eyes were fixed and staring, and she went and seated herself beneath the shed, a few steps from the lifeless body. She looked at it wistfully; now and then she would make a movement with her hand in an aimless, childish way. The Prussians had seized Father Merlier as a hostage.

It was a pretty fight. The officer, perceiving that he could not retreat without being cut to pieces, rapidly made the best disposition possible of his men; it was as well to sell their lives dearly. The Prussians were now the defenders of the mill, and the French were the attacking party. The musketry fire began with unparalleled fury; for half an hour there was no lull in the storm. Then a deep report was heard, and a ball carried away a large branch of the old elm. The French had artillery; a battery, in position just beyond the ditch where Dominique had concealed himself, commanded the main street of Rocreuse. The conflict could not last long after that.

Ah! the poor old mill! The cannon-balls raked it from wall to wall. Half the roof was carried away; two of the walls fell in. But it was on the side toward the Morelle that the damage was greatest. The ivy, torn from the tottering walls, hung in tatters, débris of every description floated away upon the bosom of the stream, and, through a great breach, Françoise's chamber was visible with its little bed, the snow-white curtains of which were carefully drawn. Two balls struck the old wheel in quick succession, and it gave one parting groan; the buckets were carried away down stream, the frame was crushed into a shapeless mass. It was the soul of the stout old mill, parting from the body.

Then the French came forward to carry the place by storm. There was a mad hand-to-hand conflict with the bayonet. Under the dull sky

the pretty valley became a huge slaughter-pen; the broad meadows looked on affrightedly, with their great isolated trees and their rows of poplars dotting them with shade, while to right and left the forest was like the walls of a tilting-ground inclosing the combatants, and, in nature's universal panic, the gentle murmur of the springs and watercourses sounded like sobs and wails.

Françoise had not stirred from the shed, where she remained hanging over Dominique's body. Father Merlier had met his death from a stray bullet. Then the French captain, the Prussians being exterminated and the mill on fire, entered the courtyard at the head of his men. It was the first success that he had gained since the breaking out of the war, so, all afire with enthusiasm, drawing himself up to the full height of his lofty stature, he laughed pleasantly, as a handsome cavalier like him might laugh, and, perceiving poor, idiotic Françoise where she crouched between the corpses of her father and her husband among the smoking ruins of the mill, he saluted her gallantly with his sword, and shouted:

"Victory! Victory!"

MARKHEIM

BY

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

"YES," said the dealer, "our windfalls are of various kinds. Some customers are ignorant, and then I touch a dividend on my superior knowledge. Some are dishonest," and here he held up the candle, so that the light fell strongly on his visitor, "and, in that case," he continued, "I profit by my virtue."

Markheim had but just entered from the daylight streets, and his eyes had not yet grown familiar with the mingled shine and darkness in the shop. At these pointed words, and before the near presence of the flame, he blinked painfully and looked aside.

The dealer chuckled. "You come to me on Christmas Day," he resumed, "when you know that I am alone in my house, put up my shutters, and make a point of refusing business. Well, you will have to pay for that; you will have to pay for my loss of time, when I should be balancing my books; you will have to pay, besides, for a kind of manner that I remark in you to-day very strongly. I am the essence of discretion, and ask no awkward questions; but, when a customer cannot look me in the eye, he

has to pay for it." The dealer once more chuckled; and then, changing to his usual business voice, though still with a note of irony, "You can give, as usual, a clear account of how you came into the possession of the object?" he continued. "Still your uncle's cabinet? A remarkable collector, sir!"

And the little, pale, round-shouldered dealer stood almost on tip-toe, looking over the tops of his gold spectacles, and nodding his head with every mark of disbelief. Markheim returned his gaze with one of infinite pity and a touch of horror.

"This time," said he, "you are in error. I have not come to sell, but to buy. I have no curios to dispose of; my uncle's cabinet is bare to the wainscot; even were it still intact, I have done well on the Stock Exchange, and should more likely add to it than otherwise, and my errand to-day is simplicity itself. I seek a Christmas present for a lady," he continued, waxing more fluent as he struck into the speech he had prepared, "and, certainly I owe you every excuse for thus disturbing you upon so small a matter. But the thing was neglected yesterday; I must produce my little compliment at dinner; and, as you very well know, a rich marriage is not a thing to be neglected."

There followed a pause, during which the dealer seemed to weigh this statement incredulously. The ticking of many clocks among the curious lumber of the shop, and the faint rush-

ing of the cabs in a near thoroughfare, filled up the interval of silence.

"Well, sir," said the dealer, "be it so. You are an old customer after all; and if, as you say, you have the chance of a good marriage, far be it from me to be an obstacle. Here is a nice thing for a lady now," he went on, "this hand-glass—fifteenth century, warranted; comes from a good collection too; but I reserve the name, in the interests of my customer, who was, just like yourself, my dear sir, the nephew and sole heir of a remarkable collector."

The dealer, while he thus ran on in his dry and biting voice, had stooped to take the object from its place; and, as he had done so, a shock had passed through Markheim, a start both of hand and foot, a sudden leap of many tumultuous passions to the face. It passed as swiftly as it came, and left no trace beyond a certain trembling of the hand that now received the glass.

"A glass," he said hoarsely, and then paused, and repeated it more clearly. "A glass? For Christmas? Surely not?"

"And why not?" cried the dealer. "Why not a glass?"

Markheim was looking upon him with an indefinable expression. "You ask me why not?" he said. "Why, look here—look in it—look at yourself! Do you like to see it? No! nor I—nor any man."

The little man had jumped back when Markheim had so suddenly confronted him with the

mirror; but now, perceiving there was nothing worse on hand, he chuckled. "Your future lady, sir, must be pretty hard-favoured," said he.

"I ask you," said Markheim, "for a Christmas present, and you give me this—this damned reminder of years, and sins and follies—this hand-conscience! Did you mean it? Had you a thought in your mind? Tell me. It will be better for you if you do. Come, tell me about yourself. I hazard a guess now—that you are in secret a very charitable man?"

The dealer looked closely at his companion. It was very odd; Markheim did not appear to be laughing; there was something in his face like an eager sparkle of hope, but nothing of mirth.

"What are you driving at?" the dealer asked.

"Not charitable?" returned the other gloomily. "Not charitable; not pious; not scrupulous; unloving, unbeloved; a hand to get money, a safe to keep it. Is that all? Dear God, man, is that all?"

"I will tell you what it is," began the dealer, with some sharpness, and then broke off again into a chuckle. "But I see this is a love-match of yours, and you have been drinking the lady's health."

"Ah!" cried Markheim, with a strange curiosity. "Ah, have you been in love? Tell me about that."

"I," cried the dealer. "I in love! I never had the time, nor have I the time to-day for all this nonsense. Will you take the glass?"

"Where is the hurry?" returned Markheim. "It is very pleasant to stand here talking; and life is so short and insecure that I would not hurry away from any pleasure—no, not even from so mild a one as this. We should rather cling, cling, to what little we can get, like a man at a cliff's edge. Every second is a cliff, if you think upon it—a cliff a mile high—high enough, if we fall, to dash us out of every feature of humanity. Hence it is best to talk pleasantly. Let us talk of each other: why should we wear this mask? Let us be confidential. Who knows, we might become friends?"

"I have just one word to say to you," said the dealer: "Either make your purchase, or walk out of my shop!"

"True, true," said Markheim. "Enough fooling. To business. Show me something else."

The dealer stooped once more, this time to replace the glass upon the shelf, his thin blond hair falling over his eyes as he did so. Markheim moved a little nearer, with one hand in the pocket of his greatcoat; he drew himself up and filled his lungs; at the same time, many different emotions were depicted together on his face: terror, horror, and resolve, fascination and a physical repulsion; and, through a haggard lift of his upper lip, his teeth looked out.

"This, perhaps, may suit," observed the dealer; and then, as he began to re-arise, Markheim bounded from behind upon his victim. The long, skewerlike dagger flashed and fell.

The dealer struggled like a hen, striking his temple on the shelf, and then tumbled on the floor in a heap.

Time had some score of small voices in that shop, some stately and slow as was becoming to their great age; others garrulous and hurried. All these told out the seconds in an intricate chorus of tickings. Then the passage of a lad's feet, heavily running on the pavement, broke in upon these smaller voices, and startled Markheim into the consciousness of his surroundings. He looked about him awfully. The candle stood on the counter, its flame solemnly wagging in a draught; and, by that inconsiderable movement, the whole room was filled with noiseless bustle and kept heaving like a sea: the tall shadows nodding, the gross blots of darkness swelling and dwindling as with respiration, the faces of the portraits and the china gods changing and wavering like images in water. The inner door stood ajar, and peered into that league of shadows with a long slit of daylight like a pointing finger.

From these fear-stricken rovings Markheim's eyes returned to the body of his victim, where it lay both humped and sprawling, incredibly small, and strangely meaner than in life. In these poor, miserly clothes, in that ungainly attitude, the dealer lay like so much sawdust. Markheim had feared to see it, and lo! it was nothing. And yet, as he gazed, this bundle of old clothes and pool of blood began to find elo-

quent voices. There it must lie; there was none to work the cunning hinges or direct the miracle of locomotion—there it must lie till it was found. Found! ay, and then? Then would this dead flesh lift up a cry that would ring over England, and fill the world with the echoes of pursuit. Ay, dead or not, this was still the enemy. "Time was that when the brains were out," he thought; and the first word struck into his mind. Time, now that the deed was accomplished—time, which had closed for the victim, had become instant and momentous for the slayer.

The thought was yet in his mind, when, first one and then another, with every variety of pace and voice—one deep as the bell from a cathedral turret, another ringing on its treble notes the prelude of a waltz—the clocks began to strike the hour of three in the afternoon.

The sudden outbreak of so many tongues in that dumb chamber staggered him. He began to bestir himself, going to and fro with the candle, beleaguered by moving shadows, and startled to the soul by chance reflections. In many rich mirrors, some of home design, some from Venice or Amsterdam, he saw his face repeated and repeated, as it were an army of spies; his own eyes met and detected him; and the sound of his own steps, lightly as they fell, vexed the surrounding quiet. And still, as he continued to fill his pockets, his mind accused him with a sickening iteration of the thousand faults of his

design. He should have chosen a more quiet hour; he should have prepared an alibi; he should not have used a knife; he should have been more cautious, and only bound and gagged the dealer, and not killed him; he should have been more bold, and killed the servant also; he should have done all things otherwise: poignant regrets, weary, incessant toiling of the mind to change what was unchangeable, to plan what was now useless, to be the architect of the irrevocable past. Meanwhile, and behind all this activity, brute terrors, like the scurrying of rats in a deserted attic, filled the more remote chambers of his brain with riot; the hand of the constable would fall heavy on his shoulder, and his nerves would jerk like a hooked fish; or he beheld, in galloping defile, the dock, the prison, the gallows, and the black coffin.

Terror of the people in the street sat down before his mind like a besieging army. It was impossible, he thought, but that some rumour of the struggle must have reached their ears and set on edge their curiosity; and now, in all the neighbouring houses, he divined them sitting motionless and with uplifted ear—solitary people, condemned to spend Christmas dwelling alone on memories of the past, and now startlingly recalled from that tender exercise; happy family parties, struck into silence round the table, the mother still with raised finger: every degree and age and humour, but all, by their own hearths, prying and hearkening and weaving the

rope that was to hang him. Sometimes it seemed to him he could not move too softly; the clink of the tall Bohemian goblets rang out loudly like a bell; and alarmed by the bigness of the ticking, he was tempted to stop the clocks. And then, again, with a swift transition of his terrors, the very silence of the place appeared a source of peril, and a thing to strike and freeze the passer-by; and he would step more boldly, and bustle aloud among the contents of the shop, and imitate, with elaborate bravado, the movements of a busy man at ease in his own house.

But he was now so pulled about by different alarms that, while one portion of his mind was still alert and cunning, another trembled on the brink of lunacy. One hallucination in particular took a strong hold on his credulity. The neighbour hearkening with white face beside his window, the passer-by arrested by a horrible surmise on the pavement—these could at worst suspect; they could not know; through the brick walls and shuttered windows, only sounds could penetrate. But here, within the house, was he alone? He knew he was; he had watched the servant set forth sweethearting, in her poor best, "out for the day" written in every ribbon and smile. Yes, he was alone, of course; and yet, in the bulk of empty house above him, he could surely hear a stir of delicate footing—he was surely conscious, inexplicably conscious, of some presence. Ay, surely; to every room and corner of the house his imagination followed it;

and now it was a faceless thing, and yet had eyes to see with; and again it was a shadow of himself; and yet again behold the image of the dead dealer, reinspired with cunning and hatred.

At times, with a strong effort, he would glance at the open door which still seemed to repel his eyes. The house was tall, the skylight small and dirty, the day blind with fog; and the light that filtered down to the ground story was exceedingly faint, and showed dimly on the threshold of the shop. And yet, in that strip of doubtful brightness, did there not hang wavering a shadow?

Suddenly, from the street outside, a very jovial gentleman began to beat with a staff on the shop door, accompanying his blows with shouts and railleries in which the dealer was continually called upon by name. Markheim, smitten into ice, glanced at the dead man. But no! he lay quite still; he was fled away far beyond earshot of these blows and shoutings; he was sunk beneath seas of silence; and his name, which would once have caught his notice above the howling of a storm, had become an empty sound. And presently the jovial gentleman desisted from his knocking, and departed.

Here was a broad hint to hurry what remained to be done, to get forth from this accusing neighbourhood, to plunge into a bath of London multitudes, and to reach, on the other side of day, that haven of safety and apparent innocence—his bed. One visitor had come: at any moment

another might follow, and be more obstinate. To have done the deed, and yet not to reap the profit, would be too abhorrent a failure. The money—that was now Markheim's concern: and, as a means to that, the keys.

He glanced over his shoulder at the open door, where the shadow was still lingering and shivering; and, with no conscious repugnance of the mind, yet with a tremor of the belly, he drew near the body of his victim. The human character had quite departed. Like a suit half-stuffed with bran, the limbs lay scattered, the trunk doubled, on the floor; and yet the thing repelled him. Although so dingy and inconsiderable to the eye, he feared it might have more significance to the touch. He took the body by the shoulders and turned it on its back. It was strangely light and supple, and the limbs, as if they had been broken, fell into the oddest postures. The face was robbed of all expression; but it was as pale as wax, and shockingly smeared with blood about one temple. That was, for Markheim, the one displeasing circumstance. It carried him back, upon the instant, to a certain fair day in a fishers' village: a gray day, a piping wind, a crowd upon the street, the blare of brasses, the booming of drums, the nasal voice of a ballad-singer; and a boy going to and fro, buried over-head in the crowd and divided between interest and fear, until, coming out upon the chief place of concourse, he beheld a booth and a great scene with pictures, dismally de-

signed, garishly coloured: Brownrigg, with her apprentice; the Mannings, with their murdered guest; Weare, in the death-grip of Thurtell; and a score, besides, of famous crimes. The thing was as clear as an illusion; he was once again that little boy; he was looking once again, and with the same sense of physical revolt, at these vile pictures; he was still stunned by the thumping of the drums. A bar of that day's music returned upon his memory; and, at that, for the first time, a qualm came over him, a breath of nausea, a sudden weakness of the joints, which he must instantly resist and conquer.

He judged it more prudent to confront than to flee from these considerations; looking the more hardily in the dead face, bending his mind to realise the nature and greatness of his crime. So little a while ago that face had moved with every change of sentiment, that pale mouth had spoken, that body had been all on fire with governable energies; and now, and by his act, that piece of life had been arrested, as the horologist, with interjected finger, arrests the beating of the clock. So he reasoned in vain; he could rise to no more remorseful consciousness; the same heart which had shuddered before the painted effigies of crime looked on its reality unmoved. At best he felt a gleam of pity for one who had been endowed in vain with all those faculties that can make the world a garden of enchantment, for one who had never lived, and who was now dead. But of penitence, no, not a tremor.

With that, shaking himself clear of these considerations, he found the keys, and advanced toward the open door of the shop. Outside, it had begun to rain smartly; and the sound of the shower upon the roof had banished silence. Like some dripping cavern, the chambers of the house were haunted by an incessant echoing, which filled the ear and mingled with the ticking of the clocks. And, as Markheim approached the door, he seemed to hear, in answer to his own cautious tread, the steps of another foot withdrawing up the stair. The shadow still palpitated loosely on the threshold. He threw a ton's weight of resolve upon his muscles, and drew back the door.

The faint, foggy daylight glimmered dimly on the bare floor and stairs; on the bright suit of armour posted, halberd in hand, upon the landing; and on the dark wood-carvings, and framed pictures that hung against the yellow panels of the wainscot. So loud was the beating of the rain through all the house that, in Markheim's ears, it began to be distinguished into many different sounds. Footsteps and sighs, the tread of regiments marching in the distance, the chink of money in the counting, and the creaking of doors held stealthily ajar, appeared to mingle with the patter of the drops upon the cupola and the gushing of the water in the pipes. The sense that he was not alone grew upon him to the verge of madness. On every side, he was haunted and begirt by presences. He heard

them moving in the upper chambers; from the shop, he heard the dead man getting to his legs; and, as he began with a great effort to mount the stairs, feet fled quietly before him, and followed stealthily behind. If he were but deaf, he thought, how tranquilly he would possess his soul! And then again, and hearkening with ever fresh attention, he blessed himself for that unresting sense which held the outposts and stood a trusty sentinel upon his life. His head turned continually on his neck; his eyes, which seemed starting from their orbits, scouted on every side, and on every side were half rewarded as with the tail of something nameless vanishing. The four-and-twenty steps to the first floor were four-and-twenty agonies.

On that first story the doors stood ajar, three of them like three ambushes, shaking his nerves like the throats of cannon. He could never again, he felt, be sufficiently immured and fortified from men's observing eyes; he longed to be home, girt in by walls, buried among bedclothes, and invisible to all but God. And, at that thought, he wondered a little, recollecting tales of other murderers and the fear they were said to entertain of heavenly avengers. It was not so, at least, with him. He feared the laws of nature, lest, in their callous and immutable procedure, they should preserve some damning evidence of his crime. He feared tenfold more, with a slavish, superstitious terror, some scis-

sion in the continuity of man's experience, some wilful illegality of nature. He played a game of skill, depending on the rules, calculating consequence from cause; and what if nature, as the defeated tyrant overthrew the chess-board, should break the mould of their succession? The like had befallen Napoleon (so writers said) when the winter changed the time of its appearance. The like might befall Markheim: the solid walls might become transparent, and reveal his doings like those of bees in a glass hive; the stout planks might yield under his foot like quicksands, and detain him in their clutch; ay, and there were soberer accidents that might destroy him: if, for instance, the house should fall, and imprison him beside the body of his victim; or the house next door should fly on fire, and the firemen invade him from all sides. These things he feared; and, in a sense, these things might be called the hands of God reached forth against sin. But about God Himself he was at ease; his act was doubtless exceptional, but so were his excuses, which God knew; it was there, and not among men, that he felt sure of justice.

When he had got safe into the drawing-room, and shut the door behind him, he was aware of a respite from alarms. The room was quite dismantled, uncarpeted besides, and strewn with packing-cases and incongruous furniture; several great pier-glasses, in which he beheld himself at various angles, like an actor on a stage;

many pictures, framed and unframed, standing, with their faces to the wall; a fine Sheraton sideboard, a cabinet of marquetry, and a great old bed, with tapestry hangings. The windows opened to the floor; but, by great good fortune, the lower part of the shutters had been closed, and this concealed him from the neighbours. Here, then, Markheim drew in a packing-case before the cabinet, and began to search among the keys. It was a long business, for there were many; and it was irksome, besides; for, after all, there may be nothing in the cabinet, and time was on the wing. But the closeness of the occupation sobered him. With the tail of his eye he saw the door—even glanced at it from time to time directly, like a besieged commander pleased to verify the good estate of his defences. But, in truth, he was at peace. The rain falling in the street sounded natural and pleasant. Presently, on the other side, the notes of a piano were awakened to the music of a hymn, and the voices of many children took up the air and words. How stately, how comfortable was the melody! How fresh the youthful voices! Markheim gave ear to it smilingly as he sorted out the keys, and his mind was thronged with answerable ideas and images—church-going children and the pealing of the high organ; children afield, bathers by the brookside, ramblers on the brambly common, kite-flyers in the windy and cloud-navigated sky; and then, at another cadence of the hymn, back again to church, and

the somnolence of summer Sundays, and the high genteel voice of the parson (which he smiled a little to recall), and the painted Jacobean tombs, and the dim lettering of the Ten Commandments in the chancel.

And as he sat thus, at once busy and absent, he was startled to his feet. A flash of ice, a flash of fire, a bursting gush of blood, went over him, and then he stood transfixed and thrilling. A step mounted the stair slowly and steadily, and presently a hand was laid upon the knob, and the lock clicked, and the door opened.

Fear held Markheim in a vise. What to expect he knew not, whether the dead man walking, or the official ministers of human justice, or some chance witness blindly stumbling in to consign him to the gallows. But when a face was thrust into the aperture, glanced round the room, looked at him, nodded and smiled as if in friendly recognition, and then withdrew again, and the door closed behind it, his fear broke loose from his control in a hoarse cry. At the sound of this the visitant returned.

"Did you call me?" he asked pleasantly, and, with that, he entered the room and closed the door behind him.

Markheim stood and gazed at him with all his eyes. Perhaps there was a film upon his sight, but the outlines of the new-comer seemed to change and waver like those of the idols in the wavering candle-light of the shop; and at times he thought he knew him; and at times he thought

he bore a likeness to himself; and always, like a lump of living terror, there lay in his bosom the conviction that this thing was not of the earth and not of God.

And yet the creature had a strange air of the commonplace, as he stood looking on Markheim with a smile; and when he added, "You are looking for the money, I believe?" it was in the tones of everyday politeness.

Markheim made no answer.

"I should warn you," resumed the other, "that the maid has left her sweetheart earlier than usual, and will soon be here. If Mr. Markheim be found in this house, I need not describe to him the consequences."

"You know me?" cried the murderer.

The visitor smiled. "You have long been a favourite of mine," he said; "and I have long observed and often sought to help you."

"What are you?" cried Markheim; "the devil?"

"What I may be," returned the other, "cannot affect the service I propose to render you."

"It can," cried Markheim; "it does! Be helped by you? No, never; not by you! You do not know me yet; thank God, you do not know me!"

"I know you," replied the visitant, with a sort of kind severity or, rather, firmness. "I know you to the soul."

"Know me!" cried Markheim. "Who can do so? My life is but a travesty and slander on

myself. I have lived to belie my nature. All men do; all men are better than this disguise that grows about and stifles them. You see each dragged away by life, like one whom bravos have seized and muffled in a cloak. If they had their own control—if you could see their faces, they would be altogether different; they would shine out for heroes and saints! I am worse than most; myself is more overlaid; my excuse is known to me and God. But, had I the time, I could disclose myself."

"To me?" inquired the visitant.

"To you before all," returned the murderer. "I supposed you were intelligent. I thought—since you exist—you would prove a reader of the heart. And yet you would propose to judge me by my acts! Think of it; my acts! I was born, and I have lived, in a land of giants; giants have dragged me by the wrists since I was born out of my mother—the giants of circumstance. And you would judge me by my acts! But can you not look within? Can you not understand that evil is hateful to me? Can you not see within me the clear writing of conscience, never blurred by any wilful sophistry, although too often disregarded? Can you not read me for a thing that surely must be common as humanity—the unwilling sinner?"

"All this is very feelingly expressed," was the reply, "but it regards me not. These points of consistency are beyond my province, and I care not in the least by what compulsion you may

have been dragged away, so as you are but carried in the right direction. But time flies; the servant delays, looking in the faces of the crowd and at the pictures on the boardings, but still she keeps moving nearer; and remember, it is as if the gallows itself was striding toward you through the Christmas streets! Shall I help you; I, who know all? Shall I tell you where to find the money?"

"For what price?" asked Markheim.

"I offer you the service for a Christmas gift," returned the other.

Markheim could not refrain from smiling with a kind of bitter triumph. "No," said he, "I will take nothing at your hands; if I were dying of thirst, and it was your hand that put the pitcher to my lips, I should find the courage to refuse. It may be credulous, but I will do nothing to commit myself to evil."

"I have no objection to a death-bed repentance," observed the visitant.

"Because you disbelieve its efficacy!" Markheim cried.

"I do not say so," returned the other; "but I look on these things from a different side, and, when the life is done, my interest falls. The man has lived to serve me, to spread black looks under colour of religion, or to sow tares in the wheat-field, as you do, in a course of weak compliance with desire. Now that he draws so near to his deliverance, he can add but one act of service—to repent, to die smiling, and thus to

EDINBURGH—THE STEVENSON HOME
AT 17 HERIOT ROW

build up in confidence and hope the more timorous of my surviving followers. I am not so hard a master. Try me. Accept my help. Please yourself in life as you have done hitherto; please yourself more amply, spread your elbows at the board; and, when the night begins to fall and the curtains to be drawn, I tell you, for your greater comfort, that you will find it even easy to compound your quarrel with your conscience and to make a truckling peace with God. I came but now from such a death-bed, and the room was full of sincere mourners, listening to the man's last words: and, when I looked into that face, which had been set as a flint against mercy, I found it smiling with hope."

"And do you, then, suppose me such a creature?" asked Markheim. "Do you think I have no more generous aspirations than to sin, and sin, and sin, and, at the last, sneak into Heaven? My heart rises at the thought. Is this, then, your experience of mankind? Or is it because you find me with red hands that you presume such baseness? And is this crime of murder indeed so impious as to dry up the very springs of good?"

"Murder is to me no special category," replied the other. "All sins are murder, even as all life is war. I behold your race, like starving mariners on a raft, plucking crusts out of the hands of famine and feeding on each other's lives. I follow sins beyond the moment of their acting; I find in all that the last consequence

is death; and, to my eyes, the pretty maid who thwarts her mother with such taking graces on a question of a ball drips no less visibly with human gore than such a murderer as yourself. Do I say that I follow sins? I follow virtues also; they differ not by the thickness of a nail; they are both scythes for the reaping angel of Death. Evil, for which I live, consists not in action, but in character. The bad man is dear to me; not the bad act, whose fruits, if we could follow them far enough down the hurtling cataract of the ages, might yet be found more blessed than those of the rarest virtues. And it is not because you have killed a dealer, but because you are Markheim, that I offer to forward your escape."

"I will lay my heart open to you," answered Markheim. "This crime on which you find me is my last. On my way to it, I have learned many lessons; itself is a lesson, a momentous lesson. Hitherto I have been driven with revolt to what I would not; I was a bond-slave to poverty, driven and scourged. There are robust virtues that can stand in these temptations; mine was not so: I had a thirst of pleasure. But to-day, and out of this deed, I pluck both warning and riches—both the power and a fresh resolve to be myself. I become in all things a free actor in the world; I begin to see myself all changed, these hands the agents of good, this heart at peace. Something comes over me out of the past; something of what I

have dreamed on Sabbath evenings to the sound of the church organ, of what I forecast when I shed tears over noble books, or talked, an innocent child, with my mother. There lies my life; I have wandered a few years, but now I see once more my city of destination."

"You are to use this money on the Stock Exchange, I think?" remarked the visitor; "and there, if I mistake not, you have already lost some thousands?"

"Ah," said Markheim, "but this time I have a sure thing."

"This time, again, you will lose," replied the visitor quietly.

"Ah, but I keep back the half!" cried Markheim.

"That also you will lose," said the other.

The sweat started upon Markheim's brow. "Well, then, what matter!" he exclaimed. "Say it be lost; say I am plunged again in poverty, shall one part of me, and that the worst, continue until the end to override the better? Evil and good run strong in me, haling me both ways. I do not love the one thing; I love all. I can conceive great deeds, renunciations, martyrdoms; and, though I be fallen to such a crime as murder, pity is no stranger to my thoughts. I pity the poor. Who knows their trials better than myself? I pity, and help them; I prize love, I love honest laughter; there is no good thing nor true thing on earth but I love it from my heart. And are my vices

only to direct my life, and my virtues to lie without effect, like some passive lumber of the mind? Not so; good, also, is a spring of acts."

But the visitant raised his finger. "For six-and-thirty years that you have been in this world," said he, "through many changes of fortune and varieties of humour, I have watched you steadily fall. Fifteen years ago, you would have started at a theft. Three years back, you would have blanched at the name of murder. Is there any crime, is there any cruelty or meanness, from which you still recoil—five years from now, I shall detect you in the fact! Downward, downward lies your way; nor can anything but death avail to stop you."

"It is true," Markheim said huskily, "I have in some degree complied with evil. But it is so with all; the very saints, in the mere exercise of living, grow less dainty, and take on the tone of their surroundings."

"I will propound to you one simple question," said the other; "and as you answer, I shall read to you your moral horoscope. You have grown in many things more lax; possibly, you do right to be so; and, at any account, it is the same with all men. But, granting that, are you in any one particular, however trifling, more difficult to please with your own conduct, or do you go in all things with a looser rein?"

"In any one?" repeated Markheim, with an anguish of consideration. "No," he added, with despair, "in none! I have gone down in all."

"Then," said the visitor, "content yourself with what you are, for you will never change, and the words of your part on this stage are irrevocably written down."

Markheim stood for a long while silent, and, indeed, it was the visitor who first broke the silence. "That being so," he said, "shall I show you the money?"

"And grace?" cried Markheim.

"Have you not tried it?" returned the other. "Two or three years ago, did I not see you on the platform of revival meetings, and was not your voice the loudest in the hymn?"

"It is true," said Markheim; "and I see clearly what remains for me by way of duty. I thank you for these lessons from my soul; my eyes are opened, and I behold myself at last for what I am."

At this moment, the sharp note of the door-bell rang through the house; and the visitant, as though this were some concerted signal for which he had been waiting, changed at once in his demeanor.

"The maid!" he cried. "She has returned, as I forewarned you, and there is now before you one more difficult passage. Her master, you must say, is ill; you must let her in, with an assured but rather serious countenance — no smiles, no overacting, and I promise you success! Once the girl within, and the door closed, the same dexterity that has already rid you of the dealer will relieve you of this last danger in

your path. Thenceforward, you have the whole evening—the whole night, if needful—to ransack the treasures of the house and to make good your safety. This is help that comes to you with the mask of danger. Up!" he cried; "up, friend; your life hangs trembling in the scales: up, and act!"

Markheim steadily regarded his counsellor. "If I be condemned to evil acts," he said, "there is still one door of freedom open—I can cease from action. If my life be an ill thing, I can lay it down. Though I be, as you say truly, at the beck of every small temptation, I can yet, by one decisive gesture, place myself beyond the reach of all. My love of good is damned to barrenness; it may, and let it be! But I have still my hatred of evil; and from that, to your galling disappointment, you shall see that I can draw both energy and courage."

The features of the visitor began to undergo a wonderful and lovely change: they brightened and softened with a tender triumph, and, even as they brightened, faded and dislimned. But Markheim did not pause to watch or understand the transformation. He opened the door, and went down-stairs very slowly, thinking to himself. His past went soberly before him; he beheld it as it was, ugly and strenuous like a dream, random as chance-medley—a scene of defeat. Life, as he thus reviewed it, tempted him no longer; but, on the further side, he perceived a quiet haven for his bark. He paused in the

passage, and looked into the shop, where the candle still burned by the dead body. It was strangely silent. Thoughts of the dealer swarmed into his mind as he stood gazing. And then the bell once more broke out into impatient clamour.

He confronted the maid upon the threshold with something like a smile.

"You had better go for the police," said he. "I have killed your master."

L'ARRABIATA

BY

JOHANN LUDWIG PAUL HEYSE

THE sun had not yet risen. Over Vesuvius hung a broad, gray sheet of mist, which stretched across as far as Naples, and darkened the little towns along that strip of coast. The sea lay calm. But, on the quays, which had been built along a small inlet of the sea under the high cliffs of the Sorrentine shore, the fishermen and their wives were already astir for the purpose of drawing ashore with stout cables the boats from which their nets had hung during the night. Others rigged their craft, trimmed the sails, or dragged oars and masts out of the huge grated vaults hewn deep into the rock to serve as a shelter for the tackle overnight. No one was idle; for even the aged who could no longer venture out upon the sea became links in the long chain of those who were hauling in the nets. Here and there on a flat roof stood an old woman spinning or busying herself with her grandchildren, whose mother was helping her husband.

"Do you see, Rachela? Yonder is our *padre curato*," said one of the old women to a little thing of ten, swinging a spindle beside her. "At this moment he is entering the boat. Antonio

is to row him over to Capri. Maria Santissima, how drowsy the reverend *signore* looks!" And she waved her hand to a diminutive, benevolent-looking priest, who was settling himself comfortably in the boat, after he had carefully lifted up the skirts of his black coat and spread them over the wooden seat. The others on the shore stopped in their work to watch their pastor set out, while he distributed friendly greetings right and left.

"And why must he go to Capri, grandmother?" asked the child. "Have the people there no pastor, that they must borrow ours?"

"Don't ask such foolish questions," said the old woman. "They have enough priests there, and the finest churches, and even a hermit, which is more than we have. But there is a noble *signora* who dwelled long at Sorrento, and was so ill that many a time the *padre* had to carry her the Most Holy Sacrament when it was thought she would not outlive the night. But, by the help of the Holy Virgin, she grew to be hale and strong again, so that she could bathe in the sea daily. And when she left here for Capri, she gave a great heap of ducats to the church and the poor folk, and would not go, they say, until the *padre* had promised to visit her there that she might confess to him. For it is astonishing in what esteem she holds him. Truly, we may bless ourselves for having a *curato* who has the gifts of an archbishop, and who is so much sought after by the great folk. The Madonna

be with him!" And again she waved her hand toward the little boat which was just putting out from shore.

"Shall we have fine weather, my son?" asked the little priest, looking thoughtfully over toward Naples.

"The sun is not yet out," answered the fellow. "We shan't let a bit of mist annoy us."

"Then row fast, so that we may arrive before the heat sets in."

Antonio was on the point of grasping the long oar, to propel the bark into the open sea, when he stopped suddenly, and gazed up at the steep path that leads from the little town of Sorrento to the quays below. Above was visible a slender girlish figure, tripping hastily down the stones and waving a kerchief. She carried a little bundle under her arm, and her attire was poor enough. But she had a noble, if somewhat wild way of throwing back her head, and the dark tresses wreathed about her forehead bore the semblance of a crown.

"What are we waiting for?" asked the *curato.*

"There's some one else coming who wishes to go to Capri—if you permit, *padre.* We'll go no slower for that; she's only a young thing, barely eighteen."

At that moment, the girl appeared from behind the wall which encloses the winding path. "Laurella?" asked the *curato.* "What business has she in Capri?"

Antonio shrugged his shoulders. She came

down with rapid strides, looking straight before her.

"Good-day, l'Arrabiata!" shouted several of the young boatmen. They would have said more, had not the *curato's* presence kept them in check, for the sullen silence with which the girl received their greeting seemed to tempt the more wanton among them.

"Good-day, Laurella," the priest cried too. "How are you? You wish to come with us to Capri?"

"If it is permitted, *padre*."

"Ask Antonio; he owns the boat. Every man is lord of his own, and God is the Lord of us all."

"There is half a *carlino*," said Laurella, without looking at the young boatman, "if it's enough!"

"You may have better use for it," he muttered, and shoved aside some baskets of oranges to make room. These he was to sell at Capri, for that rocky isle does not produce enough for the needs of its many visitors.

"I do not care to go for nothing," answered the girl, and her black eyebrows quivered.

"Come, child," said the priest; "he is a good lad, and does not want to enrich himself at the expense of your poverty. There, step in," and he held out his hand to her—"and sit down next to me. See, he has spread his jacket that you may sit more comfortably. He did not think of doing it for me. But that is like young people. They take more care of a slip of a girl than of ten

reverend fathers. Never mind, Tonino, there no excuse needed. Thus has the Lord made us, that like and like hold together."

Meantime, Laurella had stepped in and taken her seat, after having silently pushed the jacket away. The young boatman let it lie, and murmured something between his teeth. Then he pushed vigorously away from the pier, and the little boat flew out into the bay.

"What have you in the bundle?" asked the *padre*, as they floated over the sea, just turning gold under the first rays of the sun.

"Silk, thread, and a loaf, *padre*. I am to sell the silk to one woman in Capri who makes ribbons, and the thread to another."

"Did you spin it yourself?"

"Yes, sir."

"If I am not mistaken, you also once learned how to weave ribbons."

"Yes, sir. But mother is so much worse again that I cannot work away from home, and a loom of our own we cannot afford."

"Worse again? Ah me! When I was with you, last Easter, she was sitting up."

"Spring is always the worst time for her. Since we had those great storms and earthquakes, she has been forced to lie abed from pain."

"Cease not to pray, my child, that the Blessed Virgin may intercede for you. And be good and industrious, that your prayers may be heard."

After a pause: "When you were coming down toward the shore, I heard them calling to you

'Good-day, l'Arrabiata.' Why should they speak thus? 'Tis no nice name for a Christian girl, who should be gentle and mild." The girl's dark face glowed and her eyes flashed.

"They mock me because I will not dance and sing like the others, and have few words for any. But they shall leave me in peace. I do them no harm."

"True, but you can be civil to all. Let the others dance and sing to whom life is an easier matter; but even the sorrowful may utter a kind word."

She lowered her dark eyes, and drew her brows closer over them, as if to hide them. For a space, they floated on in silence. Over the moutains stood the splendour of the sun; the peak of Vesuvius soared out from the mass of clouds that hid its base, and the houses on the plain of Sorrento glittered white from amid the green orange-groves.

"Has that painter never been heard of again?" asked the *curato*—"that Neapolitan who wanted you to be his wife?"

She shook her head.

"He came to paint your picture. Why would you not let him?"

"What did he want it for? There are handsomer girls than I. And then, who can tell what he would have done with it. He might have bewitched me, my mother said, or injured my soul."

"Believe not such sinful things," said the

priest earnestly. "Are we not always in God's hand, and shall a mere man, with naught but a picture, prevail against the Lord? And you could see that he wished you well, or he would not have cared to marry you."

She was silent.

"And why did you refuse him? He was an honest man, they say, and handsome, and would have earned a better living for you and your mother than ever you can with your bit of spinning and weaving."

"We are only poor folk," she said passionately, "and mother has been ill for so long. We should have become a burden to him. And I should not suit a fine gentleman. If his friends had come to see him, he would have been ashamed of me."

"How can you speak so? I tell you the man was an excellent one. And, moreover, he wished to live at Sorrento. It will be long before another comes, as if sent from heaven to help you."

"I do not want a husband, and never shall!" she said defiantly, as if to herself.

"Have you made a vow, or do you intend to enter a convent?"

She shook her head.

"The people are right enough who reproach you for your wilfulness, even though the name they give you is an unkind one. You do not remember that you are not alone in the world, and that your stubbornness only embitters your sick mother's life. And what weighty reason

can you give why you should reject every honest hand held out to assist you and your mother? Answer me, Laurella!"

"Well, I have a reason," she said softly and reluctantly, "but I cannot reveal it."

"Not reveal it—not even to me, your confessor whom you trust and whom you know to be your friend?"

Laurella nodded.

"Then ease your mind, child. If you are right, I shall be the last to oppose you. But you are young, and know little of the world, and you may some day come to regret having thrown away your good fortune for some childish fancy."

She threw a quick, shy look at the young fellow who sat astern, busily rowing, his woolen cap pulled low over his forehead. He gazed far out across the sea and seemed buried in his own thoughts. The *curato* saw her look, and inclined his head nearer to her.

"You never knew my father," she whispered, and her eyes gleamed darkly.

"Your father? He died, I believe, when you were barely ten. What has your father (may his soul rest in Paradise) to do with your stubbornness?"

"You never knew him, *padre*. You do not know that he alone was the cause of mother's illness."

"And how?"

"Because he ill-treated her, and beat her, and trampled upon her. I remember the nights

when he came home raging. She never said a word, and obeyed him in all things. But he beat her so that my heart nearly broke. Then I pulled the bedclothes over my head, and pretended to sleep. But I wept through the night. And then, when he saw her lying on the floor, he would suddenly lift her up, and kiss her till she cried out that he would strangle her. Mother forbade me ever to speak of this; but it wore her out so that, during all these long years since his death, she has never been able to get well. And, if she should die before her time, which may Heaven forbid, I know right well who killed her."

The little priest wagged his head slowly, undetermined how far he should approve the young girl's reasons. At last he said: "Forgive him even as your mother has forgiven him. Fix not your thoughts on those sad memories, Laurella. Happier days will come and make you forget all that."

"Never can I forget that," she said, and shuddered. "And this is the reason, *padre*, why I wish to remain single—that I may not have to live with any one who would first ill-treat and then caress me. If now some one were to beat me or kiss me, I should know how to defend myself; but my mother could defend herself neither against the blows nor the kisses, because she loved him. And I do not wish to love any one so dearly that I must be ill and wretched for the sake of him."

"Ah, but you are a child, and speak like one

who does not know how things go in the world. Are all men like your poor father, that they yield to every mood and passion and are unkind to their wives? Have you not seen good, honest people enough in the whole neighbourhood, and wives who live in peace and unity with their husbands?"

"Yes, but it was not known of my father, either, how he behaved to my mother, for she would rather have died a thousand times than speak of it or complain. And all this was so because she loved him. If love be such that it seals the lips when one should cry for help, and makes one defenseless against worse things than one would expect from one's bitterest enemy—if that is love, then I will never set my heart upon any man."

"And I tell you that you are a child, and know not of what you speak. Your heart will little ask you, when the time comes, whether you wish to love or not. All that you take into your head now will not help you then." He paused; then he added: "And that painter, did you think that he, too, would be cruel?"

"He had the same look in his eyes that I saw in my father's when he begged mother's pardon, and took her in his arms to make it up with her. I know that look. A man can have that look and yet find it in his heart to beat his wife who has never done anything to vex him. I shuddered when I saw that look."

Then she became persistently silent. Nor did

the *curato* speak. He thought of many edifying sayings with which to comfort the girl, but the presence of the young boatman, who had grown restless during the latter part of the conversation, closed his lips.

When they arrived in the little harbour of Capri, after a two-hours' row, Antonio carried the little priest out of the boat over the shallow waves by the shore, and set him down reverently. But Laurella would not wait until he waded back for her. She gathered her short skirts about her, took her little wooden shoes in one hand and her bundle in the other, and splashed trippingly to the shore.

"I shall probably make a long stay at Capri to-day," said the *padre;* "you need not wait for me. I may not return until to-morrow. And you, Laurella, when you return home, remember me to your mother. I will stop in to see you within the week. You return before night, do you not?"

"If there is a chance," said the girl, as she busied herself with her skirts.

"I must return, too, as you know," said Antonio in a tone of forced indifference. "I shall wait for you until the *Ave Maria.* If you do not come then, it will be just the same to me."

"You must come, Laurella," said the little priest. "You should not leave your mother alone at night. Must you go far?"

"To a vineyard in Anacapri."

"And I to Capri. God keep you, child, and you, my son!"

Laurella kissed his hand, and murmured a farewell for the *padre* and Antonio to share between them. Antonio would have none of it. He doffed his cap to the *padre*, but did not give Laurella a look.

When, however, they had both turned their backs, his eyes followed the *padre*, who was laboriously crossing the loose gravel for only a little space, and then turned to the girl, who was ascending the rock toward the right and shielding her eyes from the glare of the sun. The shore lay below her; above her towered the steep crag. The sea was azure with an unusual depth of colour—it was a sight worthy to linger over. And chance would have it so that her look, passing the bark of Antonio, met the look with which his eyes had followed her. Each made a movement as if in excuse for some mistake, and then the girl, with her darkest frown, continued on her way.

It was an hour after noon. For two hours Antonio had been sitting on a bench in front of the fishers' tavern. Something was on his mind, for every now and then he would jump up, step out into the sun, and gaze carefully along the road which led, right and left, to the two little island towns. He seemed not to trust the weather, and said so to the hostess of the tavern. It was clear enough, to be sure, but he knew that colour of the sea and sky. Just so had it looked

before the last great storm, when the English family was barely saved. Did she remember?

"No," said the woman.

"Well, if the weather were to change before night, she was to think of him," he said.

"Have you many rich people over there?" asked the woman after a while.

"It is just beginning. We have had bad times up to now. Those who come for the sake of the baths, came late."

"It was a late spring. Did you earn more than we here at Capri?"

"Hardly enough for macaroni twice a week, if I had been dependent on my boat alone. To carry a letter to Naples now and then, or to take a fine gentleman fishing—that was about all. But you know that my uncle has large orange-groves, and is a man of substance. 'Tonio,' said he, 'you shall not want for anything so long as I live, and afterward you will not go empty, either.' And so, with the help of God, I got through the winter."

"Has your uncle any children?"

"No. He never married, and lived in foreign parts for a long time, where he gathered many a good *lira*. Now he is going to set up a great fishing business, and will put me at the head of it to look after his interests."

"Why, then, you are a made man, Antonio."

The young boatman shrugged his shoulders. "Every one has his own load to carry," he said. Then he jumped up again and looked at the

sky to the right and left, although he knew that there can be but one weather side.

"I'll bring you another bottle; your uncle can pay for it," said the hostess.

"Only another glassful; your wine here is of a fiery quality. Even now my head is warm with it."

"But it does not heat the blood. You may drink as much as you care to. Here comes my husband; you must sit and chat a while with him."

And, in fact, there he came, down from the heights, the stately *padrone* of the tavern, a net hung over his shoulder, and a red cap on his curly hair. He had taken into the town fish which had been ordered by a noble lady for the *padre's* dinner. As soon as he espied the young boatman, he waved him a cordial welcome, took his seat on the bench, and began to ask questions and tell of his own doings. His wife was just bringing a second bottle of the genuine wine of Capri, when the white sand to the left crunched beneath a footstep, and Laurella appeared on the road from Anacapri. She nodded slightly, and then stood still hesitatingly.

Antonio jumped up. "I must go," said he; "there's a girl from Sorrento who came over with the *signore curato* this morning, and must return for the night to her sick mother."

"Well, well, it's a long time till night," said the fisherman. "There's time enough for her

to drink a glass of wine with us. Come, wife, bring another glass."

"I thank you, but I do not drink," said Laurella, and remained at a distance.

"Fill the glass, wife; fill it! She only needs a little urging."

"Let her be," said the young fellow. "She has a stubborn mind, and no saint can persuade her against her will." And therewith he said a quick farewell, ran down to his boat, loosened the rope, and stood waiting for the girl. The latter nodded once more to the hosts of the tavern, and then, with hesitating steps, approached the bark. She looked about in all directions, as if she were expecting another passenger. But the shore was deserted; the fishermen slept or were out at sea with their rods and nets; a few women and children sat before their doors, sleeping or spinning, and the strangers, who had come over in the morning, were waiting until the cooler part of the day for their return. Laurella had not long to wait, for, ere she could stop him, Antonio had taken her into his arms, and carried her, as though she were a child, into the boat. Then he leapt in after her, and with a few strokes of his oar they were out on the open sea. She had taken her seat at the end of the boat, half averted from him, so that he could see her profile only. Her features seemed sterner than ever; the low, straight brow was shaded by her hair; the delicate nostril quivered wilfully, but her rounded lips were firmly

closed. After they had thus gone on for a space in silence, she began to feel the heat of the sun, unwrapped her bundle and threw the kerchief over her head. Then she began to eat, making her dinner of bread, for she had eaten nothing at Capri.

Antonio could not bear this long. He took out of the baskets two oranges that had been left over from the morning, and said: "Here is something to eat with your bread, Laurella. Don't think I kept them for you. They rolled from the baskets into the boat, and there I found them."

"Do you eat them. The bread is enough for me."

"They are refreshing in the heat, and you have walked far."

"They gave me a drink of water, and that refreshed me."

"As you please," he said, and let the oranges fall back into the basket.

Silence once more. The sea was as smooth as a mirror. Not a ripple was heard against the prow. Even the white seabirds that roost among the caves at Capri sought their prey in silence.

"You might have taken the oranges to your mother," Antonio began again.

"We have oranges at home, and when they are gone I can go and buy others."

"Well, then, take them to her with my compliments."

"She does not know you."

"You could tell her who I am."

"I do not know you either."

It was not the first time that she had thus denied him. A year ago, when that painter had been in Sorrento, it happened that one Sunday Antonio, with another young fellow, was playing bowls on the little public square near the main street. There the painter first saw Laurella, who was carrying a water-jug on her head, and went past without noticing him. The Neapolitan, struck by her appearance, stood still, and gazed after her, not seeing that he stood in the midst of the game which he might have cleared with two steps. A swift ball whirred against his ankle, to remind him that here was not the place to lose himself in meditation. He looked about, as if expecting some excuse. But the young boatman who had thrown the ball stood silent and defiant amid his friends, so the stranger found it advisable to avoid a discussion and go his ways. But the encounter had been remarked upon, and was spoken of anew when the painter had openly pressed his suit to Laurella. "I do not even know him," she had said indignantly, when the painter asked whether he was being refused for the sake of that uncivil fellow. But she had heard the gossip, too, and since then, whenever she had met Antonio, she recognised him well enough.

And now they sat together in the boat like

the deadliest enemies, while the hearts of both throbbed furiously. Antonio's usually good-natured face was crimson; he struck out with his oars so violently that the foam spattered him, and at times his lips twitched as if he were uttering angry words. She pretended not to notice, wore her most unconcerned look, and bent over the side of the boat, letting the cool water glide through her fingers. Then she unwound the kerchief, and arranged her hair, as if she were alone in the boat. Only, her eyebrows quivered, and it was in vain that she held her cool, moist hands against her burning cheeks.

Now they were well out in the open sea, and no sail was to be seen near or far. The island was left behind, the coast lay far before them in the sunny haze; not even a sea-mew disturbed that great loneliness. Antonio looked about him. An idea seemed to take shape in his mind. The colour suddenly faded from his cheeks, and he let the oars fall. Involuntarily, Laurella looked at him, with strained attention, but without fear.

"I must make an end of this!" the young fellow broke forth. "It has lasted too long already, and I wonder it has not made an end of me before. You say that you do not know me? Have you not seen long enough how I pass you like a madman, my whole heart full of what I had to tell you? And you only made a cross face, and turned your back to me!"

"What had I to say to you?" she answered

curtly. "I saw well enough that you wished to meddle with me, and I did not want to be on the tongues of wicked gossips for nothing at all. Because I will not have you for a husband—neither you nor any other."

"Nor any other? You will not always talk like that. Because you sent the painter away? Pshaw! you were a mere child then! Some day you will feel lonely, and then, mad as you are, you will take the first who offers himself."

"No one can foresee the future; maybe I might change my mind. What is it to you?"

"What is it to me?" he burst forth, and jumped up from the bench so that the little boat rocked. "What is it to me, you say? Surely you know. The man will meet with a bad end that you are kinder to than you have been to me!"

"Have I ever promised myself to you? Is it my fault if you are mad? What right have you to me?"

"Oh!" he exclaimed, "to be sure, it has not been put in writing; no advocate has put it into Latin and stamped it with his seal. But I have as much right to you as I have to enter Heaven if I have been an honest man. Do you think I can look on while you go into church with another, and bear to have the girls pass me shrugging their shoulders?"

"Do as you please. You cannot frighten me with all your threats, but I, too, shall do what I please."

"You shall not speak like this any more!"

His whole body shook with passion. "I am man enough not to let a stubborn wench like you spoil my life any longer. Do you know that you are in my power here, and must do my bidding!"

She started slightly, but her eyes flashed at him.

"Kill me if you dare," she said slowly.

"One should do nothing by halves," he said, and his voice sounded hoarse. "There's room for both of us in the sea. I cannot help it, child,"—he spoke these last words almost beseechingly and dreamily—"we must both go down there, both—now, now!" he shouted, and encircled her suddenly with both arms. But, in an instant, he drew back his right hand; the blood gushed out; she had bitten him fiercely.

"Must I do your bidding?" she cried, and pushed him away with a rapid movement. "We shall see whether I am in your power!" Swiftly she sprang overboard, and disappeared for a moment in the depths.

She rose again at once. Her little skirt clung close; her hair, loosened by the waves, hung heavy about her neck. With swift, strong, silent strokes of her arms, she swam away from the boat toward the coast. His senses seemed numbed by a sudden fright. He stood in the boat, bent forward, his eyes fixed upon her as if he were witnessing a miracle. He shook himself, threw himself upon his oars, and, straining every nerve, rowed after

her, while blood streamed into the bottom of the boat.

Swiftly though she swam, he was at her side in a trice. "For the love of the Holy Virgin, come into the boat!" he cried. "I have been mad, mad! God alone can tell what darkened my brain. Like a flash of lightning it came upon me and flamed up in me, and I forgot what I was saying or doing. I don't ask you to forgive me, Laurella; only save yourself!"

She swam on as if she had heard nothing.

"You cannot reach the land; it is two miles off. Think of your mother! If you were drowned I should die of horror!"

She measured the distance with her eyes, and then, without replying, swam back to the boat and grasped its side with her hands. He rose to help her, and his jacket, which had been lying on the bench, slipped into the sea as the boat tilted under the girl's weight. With great agility, she swung herself on board and regained her former seat. Seeing her safe, he took up his oars again. She wrung the water out of her skirt and hair. When she saw the blood at the bottom of the boat, she glanced swiftly at the hand which plied the oar as if unhurt. "There," she said, and gave him her kerchief. He shook his head, and rowed on. Finally, she got up, came near him, and bound the cloth tightly over the deep wound. Then, notwithstanding his resistance, she took the oar out of his hand, but without looking at him,

and, keeping her eyes fixed on the blood-stained wood, propelled the boat with rapid strokes. They were both pale and silent. When they neared the shore, fishermen who were about to cast their nets for the night met them. They shouted to Antonio, and teased Laurella; neither moved an eyelid nor spoke a word.

The sun stood high over Procida when they landed. Laurella shook out her skirt, which was nearly dry, and jumped ashore. The old spinning-woman who had watched them depart in the morning stood on the roof again. "What is the matter with your hand, Tonino?" she called down. "Christ, but the boat is full of blood!"

"It's nothing, godmother," the young fellow answered. "I tore my hand against a nail, which stuck out too far. It will be well by to-morrow. Only this blood of mine that is so quick to start makes it seem worse than it is."

"Wait a moment, little godson; let me put herbs on it."

"Do not trouble yourself, godmother. It has been done already, and to-morrow it will be over and forgotten. I have a healthy skin that soon closes again over a wound."

"*Addio*," said Laurella, and turned to the path winding up the cliff.

"Good-night!" he answered, without looking at her. Then he took his oars and baskets from the boat, and climbed up the little stone steps to his own hut.

He was alone in his two little rooms, where he was now pacing up and down. Through the small unglazed windows the wind blew cooler than on the calm sea, and the solitude soothed him. Long he stood before a little picture of the Virgin, gazing devoutly at her halo of silver paper. But he did not think of praying. And what should he pray for, who had no hope left?

This day seemed unending. He yearned for the darkness, for he was weary, and weak from loss of blood. His hand pained him violently, and, seating himself on a little wooden stool, he undid the cloth that enwrapped it. The repressed blood gushed out again, and all about the wound his hand was swollen. He warmed it carefully, and cooled it in water. As he drew it forth again he could see clearly the marks of Laurella's teeth. "She was right," he said to himself; "I was a brute, and deserved no better. To-morrow I will send her back the cloth by Giuseppe. She shall not see me again." And he washed the cloth carefully, and spread it in the sun, after he had bound up his hand again as well as he might with the other and with his teeth. Then he threw himself upon his bed and closed his eyes.

The bright light of the moon and the pain in his hand awakened him from his uneasy slumber. He rose again to cool in water the throbbing of his blood, when he heard a noise. "Who is it?" he called, and opened the door. Laurella stood before him.

She entered without speaking. She threw off the shawl that had covered her head, and placed a little basket on the table. Then she drew a deep breath.

"You have come to fetch your cloth," he said. "You could have saved yourself the trouble. I should have asked Giuseppe to take it to you in the morning."

"It is not on account of the cloth," she answered quickly. "I have been on the mountain to gather herbs that stop the flow of the blood. There!" And she uncovered the little basket.

"Too much trouble," he said, though without bitterness; "far too much! It's much better already, and, if it were worse, I should only have my deserts. Why do you come here at this hour? If any one should see you here—you know how they talk, empty as the talk is."

"I care for no one's talk," she said with passion. "But I wish to see your hand, and to put the herbs on it, for you can never do it with your left."

"I tell you it is unnecessary."

"Then let me see it, that I may believe you."

She grasped the unresisting hand and unbound the rag. When she saw the swelling, she shuddered, and cried, "Jesu, Maria!"

"It's a bit swollen," said he, "but in a night and a day it will be gone." She shook her head. "You cannot go to sea for a week in this state."

"The day after to-morrow, surely. And if not, what does it matter?"

She fetched a basin, and, docile as a child, he let her wash the wound. Then she applied the healing herbs, which speedily relieved the burning pain, and finally she bandaged the hand with a strip of linen that she had brought with her.

When it was done, he said: "I thank you. Now, listen: If you will do me a single kindness, forget the madness that seized me to-day, and all that I said and did. I don't know how it came. It was no fault of yours, and you shall never again hear anything from me to vex you."

She interrupted him. "It is I who must ask pardon of you. I might have explained everything better, and not have enraged you by my sullen ways. And now that wound——"

"It was self-defense, and high time to bring me back to my senses. And then, it's nothing serious. Don't speak of forgiveness. You have been good to me, and I thank you. And now go home to sleep, and there—there is your cloth; you may as well take it now."

He held it out to her, but still she lingered, struggling within herself. At last she said: "You lost your jacket, too, on account of me, and I know that the money for the oranges was in it. I did not remember until afterward. I cannot replace it now. We have nothing—or if we had anything it would be mother's. But I have this silver cross, which the painter put

on the table for me the last time he was with us. I have not looked at it since, and do not care to have it in my box any longer. It's worth a few *lire*, mother said. If you were to sell it, it might make up the lost money, and, if not quite, I could earn the rest by spinning at night when mother sleeps."

"I will take nothing," he said shortly, and pushed back the little cross that she had taken from her pocket.

"You must take it," said she. "Who knows how long the wound will keep you from earning anything? There it is; I don't wish ever to see it again."

"Then throw it into the sea."

"But it is no present; it is your just due."

"Nothing is due from you to me. If, in future, you meet me, do me the kindness not to look at me, that I may not think you wish to remind me of what I owe you. And now, good-night. Let this be the last word said."

He put her cloth and the cross into the basket and covered it. But when he looked up into her face, he started. Great heavy drops, unheeded by her, flowed down her cheeks.

"Maria Santissima!" he cried. "Are you ill? You are trembling from head to foot."

"It is nothing," she said. "I must go home." She staggered to the door. A fit of weeping overcame her. She leaned her brow against the door and sobbed bitterly. Before he reached

her, she turned round suddenly and fell upon his neck.

"I cannot bear it!" she cried, and clung to him as a dying man does to life; "I cannot listen to your kind words that bid me go with a sin on my conscience. Beat me! trample on me! curse me! Or, if it is true that after all the evil I have done you, you still love me, take me, and keep me, and do with me as you will. But do not send me away from you!" And she sobbed again, and could say no more.

Silently he held her in his arms for a while. "Do I love you still?" he cried at last. "Holy Mother of God! Do you think that all my heart's blood flowed through that little wound? Do you not feel that throbbing in my breast, for you, for you? But, if you only speak like this to try me, or because you pity me, then go, and I will forget that too. You must not think that you owe this to me because you know what I have suffered for you."

"No," she said firmly, looking up from his shoulder with eyes that were full of tears, "I love you, and have loved you for long, but I was afraid, and tried to resist it. But now I will be different, for I cannot bear it any longer not to see you when we meet on the road. And now I will kiss you," she said, "that you may doubt no more, but say to yourself, 'She kissed me, and Laurella kisses only the man she wants for her husband.'"

She kissed him thrice, and then made her es-

cape, saying: "Good-night, my love. Go to sleep now, and let your hand heal. Do not come with me, for I am afraid of no one but yourself."

And so she slipped through the door and disappeared in the shadow of the wall. But, for a long while, he looked out of the window and across the sea, over which the stars were trembling.

. . . . . .

When the little *padre curato* next came from the confessional where Laurella had knelt before him a long time, he smiled quietly to himself. "Who would have thought," he said to himself, "that God would so soon have pity on this strange heart? And I reproached myself that I did not resist the demon of stubbornness more vigorously! But our weak eyes can discern only a little of the ways of Heaven. Well, may the Lord bless her, and let me live to be rowed over the sea by Laurella's eldest born as by his father before him. Ah, to think of it—l'Arrabiata!"

GIOVANNI BOCCACIO

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CONTENTS

PAGE

"The Falcon,"
By Giovanni Boccaccio 1

"The Wind in the Rose-Bush,"
By Mary Eleanor Wilkins 12

"The Great Carbuncle,"
By Nathaniel Hawthorne 39

"The Gooseherd,"
By Hermann Sudermann 62

"Wandering Willie's Tale" (from "Red-gauntlet,")
By Sir Walter Scott 75

"The Comet,"
By Emile Erckmann and Alexandre Chatrian 104

THE FALCON

BY

GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO

SOMETIME there lived in Florence a young gentleman named Federigo, son to Signior Filippo Alberighi, who was held and reputed, both for arms and all other actions beseeming a gentleman, hardly to have his equal through all Tuscany.

This Federigo, as it is no rare matter in young gentlemen, became enamoured of a gentlewoman named Monna Giovanna, who was esteemed in her time to be the fairest lady in all Florence; in which respect, and to reach to the height of his desire, he made many sumptuous feasts and banquets, jousts, tilts, tournaments, and all other noble actions of arms, besides sending her infinitely rich and costly presents, making spare of nothing, but lashing all out in lavish expense. Notwithstanding, she being no less honest than fair, made no reckoning of whatsoever he did for her sake, or the least respect of his own person; so that Federigo, spending thus daily more than his means and ability could maintain, and no supplies anyway redounding to him, his faculties, as very easily they might, diminished in such sort that he became so poor as he had noth-

ing left him but a small farm to live upon, the slender revenues whereof were so mean as scarcely allowed him meat and drink. Yet had he a fair hawk, or falcon, hardly anywhere to be followed, so expeditious and sure she was of flight. His low ebb and poverty no way diminishing his love to the lady, but rather setting a keener edge thereon, he saw the city could no longer contain him, where he most coveted to abide, and therefore betook himself to his poor country farm, to let his falcon get his dinner and supper, patiently supporting his penurious estate without suit or means making to one for help or relief in any such necessity.

While thus he continued in this extremity, it came to pass that the husband to Giovanna fell sick, and his debility of body being such as little or no hope of life remained, he made his last will and testament, ordaining thereby that his son (already grown to indifferent stature) should be heir to all his lands and riches, wherein he abounded very greatly. Next unto him, if he chanced to die without a lawful heir, he substituted his wife, whom most dearly he affected, and so departed out of this life. Giovanna being thus left a widow, as commonly it is the custom of our city dames during the summer season she went to a house of her own in the country, which was somewhat near to poor Federigo's farm, and where he lived in such an honest kind of contented poverty.

Hereupon the young gentleman, her son, tak-

ing great delight in hounds and hawks, grew into familiarity with poor Federigo, and, having seen many fair flights of his falcon, they pleased him so extraordinarily that he earnestly desired to enjoy her as his own, yet durst not move the motion for her, because he saw how choicely Federigo esteemed her. Within a short while after the young gentleman became very sick, whereat his mother grieved exceedingly, as having no more but he, and never parting from him either night or day, comforting him so kindly as she could, demanding if he had a desire to anything, urging him to reveal it, and assuring him withal that, if it were within the compass of possibility, he should have it. The youth, hearing how many times she had made him these offers and with such vehement protestations of performance, at last spake thus:

"Mother," quoth he, "if you can do so much for me as that I may have Federigo's falcon, I am persuaded that my sickness soon will cease." The lady hearing this, sate some short while musing to herself, and began to consider what she might best do to compass her son's desire, for well she knew how long a time Federigo had most lovingly kept it, not suffering it ever to be out of his sight. Moreover, she remembered how earnest in affection he had been to her, never thinking himself happy but only when he was in her company; wherefore she entered into private advice with her own thoughts: "Shall I send or go myself in person to request

the falcon of him, it being the best that ever flew? It is his only jewel of delight, and, that taken from him, no longer can he wish to live in this world. How far, then, void of understanding, shall I show myself to rob a gentleman of his felicity, having no other joy or comfort left him." These and the like considerations wheeled about her troubled brain, only in tender love to her son, persuading herself assuredly that the falcon were her own if she would but request it, yet not knowing whereon it were best to resolve, she returned no answer to her son, but sate still in her silent meditation. At length, love to the youth so prevailed with her that she concluded on his satisfaction, and come of it what could, she would not send for the falcon, but go herself in person to request her, and then return home again with her, whereupon thus she spake: "Son, comfort thyself, and let languishing thoughts no longer offend thee; for here I promise thee that the first thing I do to-morrow morning shall be my journey for the falcon, and assure thyself that I will bring her with me." Whereat the youth was so joyed that he imagined his sickness began instantly a little to leave him, and promised him a speedy recovery.

Somewhat early the next morning the lady, in care of her sick son's health, was up and ready betimes, and taking another gentlewoman with her, only as a morning recreation, she walked to Federigo's poor country farm, knowing that

it would not a little glad him to see her. At the time of his arrival there he was by chance in a poor garden on the back of the house, because as yet it was not convenient time for flight; but when he heard that Giovanna was come thither, and desired to have some conference with him, as one almost confounded with admiration, in all haste he ran to her and saluted her with most humble reverence. She, in all modest and gracious manner, requited him with the like salutations, thus speaking to him: "Signior Federigo, your own best wishes befriend you. I am now come hither to recompense some part of your past travails, which heretofore you pretended to suffer for my sake, when your love was more to me than did well become you to offer or myself to accept; and such is the nature of my recompense that I make myself your guest, and mean this day to dine with you, as also this gentlewoman, making no doubt of our welcome." Whereto, with lowly reverence, thus he replied:

"Madam, I do not remember that ever I sustained any loss or hindrance by you, but rather so much good, as, if I was worth anything, it proceeded from your deservings, and by the service in which I did stand engaged to you. But my present happiness can no way be equalled, derived from your superabounding gracious favour and more than common course of kindness, vouchsafing of your own liberal nature, to come and visit so poor a servant. Oh,

that I had as much to spend again as heretofore I have riotously run through, what a welcome would your poor host bestow on you for gracing this homely house with your divine presence!" With these words he conducted her into his house and then into his simple garden, where, having no convenient company for her, he said: "Madam, the poverty of this place is such that it affordeth none fit for your conversation. This poor woman, wife to an honest husbandman, will attend on you while that I with some speed shall make dinner ready."

Poor Federigo, although his necessity was extreme and his grief great, remembering his former inordinate expenses, a moiety whereof would now have stood him in some stead, yet he had a heart as free and forward as ever, not a jot dejected in his mind, though utterly overthrown by fortune. Alas! how was his good soul afflicted that he had nothing to honour his lady with! Up and down he ran, one while this way, then again another, exclaiming on his disastrous fate like a man enraged or bereft of his senses, for he had not one penny of money, neither pawn nor pledge, wherewith to procure any. The time hasted on, and he would gladly, though in mean measure, express his honourable respect to the lady. To beg of any his nature denied it, and to borrow he could not, because his neighbours were as needy as himself. At last, looking round about, and seeing his falcon standing on her perch which he felt to be

very plump and fat, being void of all other helps in his need, and thinking her to be a fowl fit for so noble a lady to feed on, without any further demurring or delay he plucked off her neck, and caused the poor woman presently to pull her feathers; which being done, he put her on the spit, and in a short time she was daintily roasted. Himself covered the table, set bread and salt on, and laid the napkins, whereof he had but a few left. Going then with cheerful looks into the garden, he told the lady that dinner was ready, and nothing now wanted but her presence. She and the gentlewoman went in, and being seated at the table, not knowing what they fed on, the falcon was all their food, and Federigo not a little joyful that his credit was so well saved. When they were risen from the table, and had spent some small time in familiar conference, the lady thought it fit to acquaint him with the reason of her coming thither, and, therefore, in very kind manner thus began:

"Federigo, if you do yet remember your former carriage toward me, as also my many modest and chaste denials, which, perhaps, you thought to savour of a harsh, cruel, and unwomanly nature, I make no doubt but you will wonder at my present presumption, when you understand the occasion which expressly moved me to come hither. But if you were possessed of children, or ever had any, whereby you might comprehend what love in nature is due unto them, then I durst assure myself you would

partly hold me excused. Now, in regard that you never had any, and myself for my part only but one, I stand not exempted from those laws which are in common to other mothers; and being compelled to obey the power of those laws contrary to mine own will and those duties which reason ought to maintain, I am to request such a gift of you, which I am certain that you do make most precious account of, as in manly equity you can do no less. For Fortune hath been extremely adverse to you, that she hath robbed you of many other pleasures, allowing you no comfort or delight but only that poor one, which is your fair falcon, of which bird my son is become so strangely desirous as, if I do not bring her to him at my coming home, I fear so much the extremity of his sickness as nothing can ensue thereon but his loss of life. Wherefore I beseech you, not in regard of the love you have borne me—for thereby you stand no way obliged—but in your own gentle nature (which hath always declared itself ready in you to do more kind offices generally than any other gentleman that I know), you will be pleased to give her me, or, at the least, let me buy her of you, which if you do, I shall freely then confess that only by your means my son's life is saved, and we both shall forever remain engaged to you."

When Federigo had heard the lady's request, which was quite out of his power to grant because the bird had been her service at dinner, he stood like a man merely dulled in his senses,

the tears trickling amain down his cheeks, and he was not able to utter one word, which she perceiving, began to conjecture immediately that these tears and passions proceeded rather from grief of mind, as being more loth to part with his falcon than any kind of manner which made her ready to say that she would not have it. Nevertheless, she did not speak, but rather attended his answer, which, after some small respite, he returned in this manner:

"Madam, since the hour when first my affection became solely devoted to your service, Fortune hath been cross and contrary to me in many occasions, as justly and in good reason I may complain of her, yet all seemed light and easy to be endured in comparison of her present malicious contradictions, to my utter overthrow and perpetual molestation. Considering that you are come hither to my poor house, which, while I was rich and able, you would not so much as vouchsafe to look on. And now you have requested a small matter of me, wherein she hath also most crookedly thwarted me, because she hath disabled me in bestowing so mean a gift, as yourself will confess when it shall be related to you in few words.

"So soon as I heard that it was your gracious pleasure to dine with me, having regard to your excellency, and what, by merit, is justly due unto you, I thought it a part of my bounden duty to entertain you with such excellent viands as my poor power could any way compass, and

far beyond respect or welcome to other common and ordinary persons. Whereupon, remembering my falcon, which you now ask for, and her goodness excelling all other of her kind, I supposed that she would make a dainty dish for your diet, and having dressed her so well as I could devise to do, you have fed heartily on her, and I am proud that I have so well bestown her. But perceiving now that you would have her for your sick son, it is no mean affliction to me that I am disabled of yielding you contentment, which all my lifetime I have desired to do."

To prove his words, the feathers, claws, and beak were brought in, which when she saw, she greatly blamed him for killing so rare a falcon to content the appetite of any woman. Yet she commended his spirit which poverty had no power to abase. Lastly, her hopes being frustrate for enjoying the falcon, and fearing the health of her son, she thanked Federigo for his kindness, returning home very melancholy. Shortly after her son, either grieving that he could not have the falcon, or by extremity of his disease, chanced to die, leaving his mother a woful lady. After so much time was expired as might agree with mourning, her brethren made motions to her to marry again, because she was very rich, and yet but young. Now although she was well contented to remain a widow, yet being continually importuned by them, and remembering the honourable generosity of Federigo, his last poor yet magnificent

dinner, in killing his falcon for her sake, said to her brethren: "This kind of life doth like me so well, as willingly I would not leave it, but seeing you are so earnest, let me plainly tell you that I will never accept of any other husband but only Federigo degli Alberighi."

Her brethren in scornful manner reproved her, telling her he was a beggar, and had nothing left. "I know it well," quoth she, "and am heartily sorry for it. But give me a man that hath need of wealth, rather than wealth that hath need of a man." The brethren hearing how she stood addicted, and knowing Federigo to be a worthy gentleman, though poor, consented thereto, so she bestowed herself and her riches on him. He, on the other side, having so noble a lady to his wife, and the same whom he had so long dearly loved, submitting all his fairest fortunes unto her, became a better husband for the world than before, and they lived and loved in equal joy and happiness.

THE WIND IN THE ROSE-BUSH

BY

MARY ELEANOR WILKINS

FORD VILLAGE has no railroad station, being on the other side of the river from Porter's Falls, and accessible only by the ford which gives it its name, and a ferry line.

The ferry-boat was waiting when Rebecca Flint got off the train with her bag and lunch-basket. When she and her small trunk were safely embarked, she sat stiff and straight and calm in the ferry-boat as it shot swiftly and smoothly across stream. There was a horse attached to a light country wagon on board, and he pawed the deck uneasily. His owner stood near, with a wary eye upon him, although he was chewing, with as dully reflective an expression as a cow. Beside Rebecca sat a woman of about her own age, who kept looking at her with furtive curiosity; her husband, short and stout and saturnine, stood near her. Rebecca paid no attention to either of them. She was tall and spare and pale, the type of a spinster, yet with rudimentary lines and expressions of matronhood. She all unconsciously held her shawl, rolled up in a canvas bag, on her left hip, as if it had been a child. She wore a settled

frown of dissent at life, but it was the frown of a mother who regarded life as a froward child, rather than as an everwhelming fate.

The other woman continued staring at her; she was mildly stupid, except for an over-developed curiosity which made her at times sharp beyond belief. Her eyes glittered, red spots came on her flaccid cheeks; she kept opening her mouth to speak, making little abortive motions. Finally she could endure it no longer; she nudged Rebecca boldly.

"A pleasant day," said she.

Rebecca looked at her and nodded coldly.

"Yes, very," she assented.

"Have you come far?"

"I have come from Michigan."

"Oh!" said the woman, with awe. "It's a long way," she remarked presently.

"Yes, it is," replied Rebecca, conclusively.

Still the other woman was not daunted; there was something which she determined to know, possibly roused thereto by a vague sense of incongruity in the other's appearance. "It's a long ways to come and leave a family," she remarked with painful slyness.

"I ain't got any family to leave," returned Rebecca shortly.

"Then you ain't——"

"No, I ain't."

"Oh!" said the woman.

Rebecca looked straight ahead at the race of the river.

It was a long ferry. Finally Rebecca herself waxed unexpectedly loquacious. She turned to the other woman and inquired if she knew John Dent's widow who lived in Ford Village. "Her husband died about three years ago," said she, by way of detail.

The woman started violently. She turned pale, then she flushed; she cast a strange glance at her husband, who was regarding both women with a sort of stolid keenness.

"Yes, I guess I do," faltered the woman finally.

"Well, his first wife was my sister," said Rebecca with the air of one imparting important intelligence.

"Was she?" responded the other woman feebly. She glanced at her husband with an expression of doubt and terror, and he shook his head forbiddingly.

"I'm going to see her, and take my niece Agnes home with me," said Rebecca.

Then the woman gave such a violent start that she noticed it.

"What is the matter?" she asked.

"Nothin', I guess," replied the woman, with eyes on her husband, who was slowly shaking his head, like a Chinese toy.

"Is my niece sick?" asked Rebecca with quick suspicion.

"No, she ain't sick," replied the woman with alacrity. Then she caught her breath with a gasp.

"When did you see her?"

"Let me see; I ain't seen her for some little time," replied the woman. Then she caught her breath again.

"She ought to have grown up real pretty, if she takes after my sister. She was a real pretty woman," Rebecca said wistfully.

"Yes, I guess she did grow up pretty," replied the woman in a trembling voice.

"What kind of a woman is the second wife?"

The woman glanced at her husband's warning face. She continued to gaze at him while she replied in a choking voice to Rebecca:

"I—guess she's a nice woman," she replied. "I—don't know, I—guess so. I—don't see much of her."

"I felt kind of hurt that John married again so quick," said Rebecca; "but I suppose he wanted his house kept, and Agnes wanted care. I wasn't so situated that I could take her when her mother died. I had my own mother to care for, and I was school-teaching. Now mother has gone, and my uncle died six months ago and left me quite a little property, and I've given up my school, and I've come for Agnes. I guess she'll be glad to go with me, though I suppose her stepmother is a good woman and has always done for her."

The man's warning shake at his wife was fairly portentous.

"I guess so," said she.

"John always wrote that she was a beautiful woman," said Rebecca.

Then the ferry-boat grated on the shore.

John Dent's widow had sent a horse and wagon to meet her sister-in-law. When the woman and her husband went down the road, on which Rebecca in the wagon with her trunk soon passed them, she said reproachfully:

"Seems as if I'd ought to have told her, Thomas."

"Let her find it out herself," replied the man. "Don't you go to burnin' your fingers in other folks's puddin', Maria."

"Do you s'pose she'll see anything?" asked the woman, with a spasmodic shudder and a terrified roll of her eyes.

"See!" returned her husband with stolid scorn. "Better be sure there's anything to see."

"Oh, Thomas, they say——"

"Lord, ain't you found out that what they say is mostly lies?"

"But if it should be true, and she's a nervous woman, she might be scared enough to lose her wits," said his wife, staring uneasily after Rebecca's erect figure in the waggon disappearing over the crest of the hilly road.

"Wits that are so easy upset ain't worth much," declared the man. "You keep out of it, Maria."

Rebecca, in the meantime, rode on in the wagon, beside a flaxen-headed boy, who looked, to her understanding, not very bright. She

asked him a question, and he paid no attention. She repeated it, and he responded with a bewildered and incoherent grunt. Then she let him alone, after making sure that he knew how to drive straight.

They had travelled about half a mile, passed the village square, and gone a short distance beyond, when the boy drew up with a sudden "Whoa!" before a very prosperous-looking house. It had been one of the aboriginal cottages of the vicinity, small and white, with a roof extending on one side over a piazza, and a tiny "L" jutting out in the rear, on the right hand. Now the cottage was transformed by dormer windows, a bay window on the piazzaless side, a carved railing down the front steps, and a modern hard-wood door.

"Is this John Dent's house?" asked Rebecca.

The boy was as sparing of speech as a philosopher. His only response was in flinging the reins over the horse's back, stretching out one foot to the shaft, and leaping out of the wagon, then going around to the rear for the trunk. Rebecca got out and went toward the house. Its white paint had a new gloss; its blinds were an immaculate apple green; the lawn was trimmed as smooth as velvet, and it was dotted with scrupulous groups of hydrangeas and cannas.

"I always understood that John Dent was well-to-do," Rebecca reflected comfortably. "I guess Agnes will have considerable. I've got

enough, but it will come in handy for her schooling. She can have advantages."

The boy dragged the trunk up the fine gravel-walk, but before he reached the steps leading up to the piazza, for the house stood on a terrace, the front door opened and a fair, frizzled head of a very large and handsome woman appeared. She held up her black silk skirt, disclosing voluminous ruffles of starched embroidery, and waited for Rebecca. She smiled placidly, her pink, double-chinned face widened and dimpled, but her blue eyes were wary and calculating. She extended her hand as Rebecca climbed the steps.

"This is Miss Flint, I suppose," said she.

"Yes, ma'am," replied Rebecca, noticing with bewilderment a curious expression compounded of fear and defiance on the other's face.

"Your letter only arrived this morning," said Mrs. Dent, in a steady voice. Her great face was a uniform pink, and her china-blue eyes were at once aggressive and veiled with secrecy.

"Yes, I hardly thought you'd get my letter," replied Rebecca. "I felt as if I could not wait to hear from you before I came. I supposed you would be so situated that you could have me a little while without putting you out too much, from what John used to write me about his circumstances, and when I had that money so unexpected I felt as if I must come for Agnes. I suppose you will be willing to give her up

You know she's my own blood, and of course she's no relation to you, though you must have got attached to her. I know from her picture what a sweet girl she must be, and John always said she looked like her own mother, and Grace was a beautiful woman, if she was my sister."

Rebecca stopped and stared at the other woman in amazement and alarm. The great handsome blonde creature stood speechless, livid, gasping, with her hand to her heart, her lips parted in a horrible caricature of a smile.

"Are you sick?" cried Rebecca, drawing near. "Don't you want me to get you some water?"

Then Mrs. Dent recovered herself with a great effort. "It is nothing," she said. "I am subject to—spells. I am over it now. Won't you come in, Miss Flint?"

As she spoke, the beautiful deep-rose colour suffused her face, her blue eyes met her visitor's with the opaqueness of turquoise—with a revelation of blue, but a concealment of all behind.

Rebecca followed her hostess in, and the boy who had waited quiescently, climbed the steps with the trunk. But before they entered the door a strange thing happened. On the upper terrace, close to the piazza-post, grew a great rose-bush, and on it, late in the season though it was, one small red, perfect rose.

Rebecca looked at it, and the other woman

extended her hand with a quick gesture. "Don't you pick that rose!" she brusquely cried.

Rebecca drew herself up with stiff dignity.

"I ain't in the habit of picking other folks's roses without leave," said she.

As Rebecca spoke she started violently, and lost sight of her resentment, for something singular happened. Suddenly the rose-bush was agitated violently as if by a gust of wind, yet it was a remarkably still day. Not a leaf of the hydrangea standing on the terrace close to the rose trembled.

"What on earth——" began Rebecca, then she stopped with a gasp at the sight of the other woman's face. Although a face, it gave somehow the impression of a desperately clutched hand of secrecy.

"Come in!" said she in a harsh voice, which seemed to come forth from her chest with no intervention of the organs of speech. "Come into the house. I'm getting cold out here."

"What makes that rose-bush blow so when there isn't any wind?" asked Rebecca, trembling with vague horror, yet resolute.

"I don't see as it is blowing," returned the woman calmly. And as she spoke, indeed, the bush was quiet.

"It was blowing," declared Rebecca.

"It isn't now," said Mrs. Dent. "I can't try to account for everything that blows out-of-doors. I have too much to do."

She spoke scornfully and confidently, with

defiant, unflinching eyes, first on the bush, then on Rebecca, and led the way into the house.

"It looked queer," persisted Rebecca, but she followed, and also the boy with the trunk.

Rebecca entered an interior, prosperous, even elegant, according to her simple ideas. There were Brussels carpets, lace curtains, and plenty of brilliant upholstery and polished wood.

"You're real nicely situated," remarked Rebecca, after she had become a little accustomed to her new surroundings and the two women were seated at the tea-table.

Mrs. Dent stared with a hard complacency from behind her silver-plated service. "Yes, I be," said she.

"You got all the things new?" said Rebecca hesitatingly, with a jealous memory of her dead sister's bridal furnishings.

"Yes," said Mrs. Dent; "I was never one to want dead folks's things, and I had money enough of my own, so I wasn't beholden to John. I had the old duds put up at auction. They didn't bring much."

"I suppose you saved some for Agnes. She'll want some of her poor mother's things when she is grown up," said Rebecca with some indignation.

The defiant stare of Mrs. Dent's blue eyes waxed more intense. "There's a few things up garret," said she.

"She'll be likely to value them," remarked Rebecca. As she spoke she glanced at the

window. "Isn't it most time for her to be coming home?" she asked.

"Most time," answered Mrs. Dent carelessly; "but when she gets over to Addie Slocum's she never knows when to come home."

"Is Addie Slocum her intimate friend?"

"Intimate as any."

"Maybe we can have her come out to see Agnes when she's living with me," said Rebecca wistfully. "I suppose she'll be likely to be homesick at first."

"Most likely," answered Mrs. Dent.

"Does she call you mother?" Rebecca asked.

"No, she calls me Aunt Emeline," replied the other woman shortly. "When did you say you were going home?"

"In about a week, I thought, if she can be ready to go so soon," answered Rebecca with a surprised look.

She reflected that she would not remain a day longer than she could help after such an inhospitable look and question.

"Oh, as far as that goes," said Mrs. Dent, "it wouldn't make any difference about her being ready. You could go home whenever you felt that you must, and she could come afterward."

"Alone?"

"Why not? She's a big girl now, and you don't have to change cars."

"My niece will go home when I do, and not travel alone; and if I can't wait here for her, in

the house that used to be her mother's and my sister's home, I'll go and board somewhere," returned Rebecca with warmth.

"Oh, you can stay here as long as you want to. You're welcome," said Mrs. Dent.

Then Rebecca started. "There she is!" she declared in a trembling, exultant voice. Nobody knew how she longed to see the girl.

"She isn't as late as I thought she'd be," said Mrs. Dent, and again that curious, subtle change passed over her face, and again it settled into that stony impassiveness.

Rebecca stared at the door, waiting for it to open. "Where is she?" she asked presently.

"I guess she's stopped to take off her hat in the entry," suggested Mrs. Dent.

Rebecca waited. "Why don't she come? It can't take her all this time to take off her hat."

For answer Mrs. Dent rose with a stiff jerk and threw open the door.

"Agnes!" she called. "Agnes!" Then she turned and eyed Rebecca. "She ain't there."

"I saw her pass the window," said Rebecca in bewilderment.

"You must have been mistaken."

"I know I did," persisted Rebecca.

"You couldn't have."

"I did. I saw first a shadow go over the ceiling, then I saw her in the glass there"—she pointed to a mirror over the sideboard opposite —"and then the shadow passed the window."

"How did she look in the glass?"

"Light and light-haired, with the light hair kind of tossing over her forehead."

"You couldn't have seen her."

"Was that like Agnes?"

"Like enough; but of course you didn't see her. You've been thinking so much about her that you thought you did."

"You thought *you* did."

"I thought I saw a shadow pass the window, but I must have been mistaken. She didn't come in, or we would have seen her before now. I knew it was too early for her to get home from Addie Slocum's, anyhow."

When Rebecca went to bed Agnes had not returned. Rebecca had resolved that she would not retire until the girl came, but she was very tired, and she reasoned with herself that she was foolish. Besides, Mrs. Dent suggested that Agnes might go to the church social with Addie Slocum. When Rebecca suggested that she be sent for and told that her aunt had come, Mrs. Dent laughed meaningly.

"I guess you'll find out that a young girl ain't so ready to leave a sociable, where there's boys, to see her aunt," said she.

"She's too young," said Rebecca incredulously and indignantly.

"She's sixteen," replied Mrs. Dent; "and she's always been great for the boys."

"She's going to school four years after I

get her before she thinks of boys," declared Rebecca.

"We'll see," laughed the other woman.

After Rebecca went to bed, she lay awake a long time listening for the sound of girlish laughter and a boy's voice under her window; then she fell asleep.

The next morning she was down early. Mrs. Dent, who kept no servants, was busily preparing breakfast.

"Don't Agnes help you about breakfast?" asked Rebecca.

"No, I let her lay," replied Mrs. Dent shortly.

"What time did she get home last night?"

"She didn't get home."

"What?"

"She didn't get home. She stayed with Addie. She often does."

"Without sending you word?"

"Oh, she knew I wouldn't worry."

"When will she be home?"

"Oh, I guess she'll be along pretty soon."

Rebecca was uneasy, but she tried to conceal it, for she knew of no good reason for uneasiness. What was there to occasion alarm in the fact of one young girl staying overnight with another? She could not eat much breakfast. Afterward she went out on the little piazza, although her hostess strove furtively to stop her.

"Why don't you go out back of the house? It's real pretty—a view over the river," she said.

"I guess I'll go out here," replied Rebecca. She had a purpose: to watch for the absent girl.

Presently Rebecca came hustling into the house through the sitting-room, into the kitchen where Mrs. Dent was cooking.

"That rose-bush!" she gasped.

Mrs. Dent turned and faced her.

"What of it?"

"It's a-blowing."

"What of it?"

"There isn't a mite of wind this morning."

Mrs. Dent turned with an inimitable toss of her fair head. "If you think I can spend my time puzzling over such nonsense as——" she began, but Rebecca interrupted her with a cry and a rush to the door.

"There she is now!" she cried.

She flung the door wide open, and curiously enough a breeze came in and her own gray hair tossed, and a paper blew off the table to the floor with a loud rustle, but there was nobody in sight.

"There's nobody here," Rebecca said.

She looked blankly at the other woman, who brought her rolling-pin down on a slab of pie-crust with a thud.

"I didn't hear anybody," she said calmly.

"*I saw somebody pass that window!*"

"You were mistaken again."

"I *know* I saw somebody."

"You couldn't have. Please shut that door."

Rebecca shut the door. She sat down beside the window and looked out on the autumnal yard, with its little curve of footpath to the kitchen door.

"What smells so strong of roses in this room?" she said presently. She sniffed hard.

"I don't smell anything but these nutmegs."

"It is not nutmeg."

"I don't smell anything else."

"Where do you suppose Agnes is?"

"Oh, perhaps she has gone over the ferry to Porter's Falls with Addie. She often does. Addie's got an aunt over there, and Addie's got a cousin, a real pretty boy."

"You suppose she's gone over there?"

"Mebbe. I shouldn't wonder."

"When should she be home?"

"Oh, not before afternoon."

Rebecca waited with all the patience she could muster. She kept reassuring herself, telling herself that it was all natural, that the other woman could not help it, but she made up her mind that if Agnes did not return that afternoon she should be sent for.

When it was four o'clock she started up with resolution. She had been furtively watching the onyx clock on the sitting-room mantel; she had timed herself. She had said that if Agnes was not home by that time she should demand that she be sent for. She rose and stood before Mrs. Dent, who looked up coolly from her embroidery.

"I've waited just as long as I'm going to," she said. "I've come 'way from Michigan to see my own sister's daughter and take her home with me. I've been here ever since yesterday —twenty-four hours—and I haven't seen her. Now I'm going to. I want her sent for."

Mrs. Dent folded her embroidery and rose.

"Well, I don't blame you," she said. "It is high time she came home. I'll go right over and get her myself."

Rebecca heaved a sigh of relief. She hardly knew what she had suspected or feared, but she knew that her position had been one of antagonism if not accusation, and she was sensible of relief.

"I wish you would," she said gratefully, and went back to her chair, while Mrs. Dent got her shawl and her little white head-tie. "I wouldn't trouble you, but I do feel as if I couldn't wait any longer to see her," she remarked apologetically.

"Oh, it ain't any trouble at all," said Mrs. Dent as she went out. "I don't blame you; you have waited long enough."

Rebecca sat at the window watching breathlessly until Mrs. Dent came stepping through the yard alone. She ran to the door and saw, hardly noticing it this time, that the rose-bush was again violently agitated, yet with no wind evident elsewhere.

"Where is she?" she cried.

Mrs. Dent laughed with stiff lips as she came

up the steps over the terrace. "Girls will be girls," said she. "She's gone with Addie to Lincoln. Addie's got an uncle who's conductor on the train, and lives there, and he got 'em passes, and they're goin' to stay to Addie's Aunt Margaret's a few days. Mrs. Slocum said Agnes didn't have time to come over and ask me before the train went, but she took it on herself to say it would be all right, and——"

"Why hadn't she been over to tell you?" Rebecca was angry, though not suspicious. She even saw no reason for her anger.

"Oh, she was putting up grapes. She was coming over just as soon as she got the black off her hands. She heard I had company, and her hands were a sight. She was holding them over sulphur matches."

"You say she's going to stay a few days?" repeated Rebecca dazedly.

"Yes; till Thursday, Mrs Slocum said."

"How far is Lincoln from here?"

"About fifty miles. It'll be a real treat to her. Mrs. Slocum's sister is a real nice woman."

"It is goin' to make it pretty late about my goin' home."

"If you don't feel as if you could wait, I'll get her ready and send her on just as soon as I can," Mrs. Dent said sweetly.

"I'm going to wait," said Rebecca grimly.

The two women sat down again, and Mrs. Dent took up her embroidery.

"Is there any sewing I can do for her?"

Rebecca asked finally in a desperate way. "If I can get her sewing along some——"

Mrs. Dent arose with alacrity and fetched a mass of white from the closet. "Here," she said, "if you want to sew the lace on this nightgown. I was going to put her to it, but she'll be glad enough to get rid of it. She ought to have this and one more before she goes. I don't like to send her away without some good underclothing."

Rebecca snatched at the little white garment and sewed feverishly.

That night she wakened from a deep sleep a little after midnight and lay a minute trying to collect her faculties and explain to herself what she was listening to. At last she discovered that it was the then popular strains of "The Maiden's Prayer" floating up through the floor from the piano in the sitting-room below. She jumped up, threw a shawl over her nightgown, and hurried downstairs trembling. There was nobody in the sitting-room; the piano was silent. She ran to Mrs. Dent's bedroom and called hysterically:

"Emeline! Emeline!"

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Dent's voice from the bed. The voice was stern, but had a note of consciousness in it.

"Who—who was that playing 'The Maiden's Prayer' in the sitting-room, on the piano?"

"I didn't hear anybody."

"There was some one."

"I didn't hear anything."

"I tell you there was some one. But—*there ain't anybody there.*"

"I didn't hear anything."

"I did—somebody playing 'The Maiden's Prayer' on the piano. Has Agnes got home? I *want to know.*"

"Of course Agnes hasn't got home," answered Mrs. Dent with rising inflection. "Be you gone crazy over that girl? The last boat from Porter's Falls was in before we went to bed. Of course she ain't come."

"I heard——"

"You were dreaming."

"I wasn't; I was broad awake."

Rebecca went back to her chamber and kept her lamp burning all night.

The next morning her eyes upon Mrs. Dent were wary and blazing with suppressed excitement. She kept opening her mouth as if to speak, then frowning, and setting her lips hard. After breakfast she went upstairs, and came down presently with her coat and bonnet.

"Now, Emeline," she said, "I want to know where the Slocums live."

Mrs. Dent gave a strange, long, half-lidded glance at her. She was finishing her coffee.

"Why?" she asked.

"I'm going over there and find out if they have heard anything from her daughter and Agnes since they went away. I don't like what I heard last night."

"You must have been dreaming."

"It don't make any odds whether I was or not. Does she play 'The Maiden's Prayer' on the piano? I want to know."

"What if she does? She plays it a little, I believe. I don't know. She don't half play it, anyhow; she ain't got an ear."

"That wasn't half played last night. I don't like such things happening. I ain't superstitious, but I don't like it. I'm going. Where do the Slocums live?"

"You go down the road over the bridge past the old grist mill, then you turn to the left; it's the only house for half a mile. You can't miss it. It has a barn with a ship in full sail on the cupola."

"Well, I'm going. I don't feel easy."

About two hours later Rebecca returned. There were red spots on her cheeks. She looked wild. "I've been there," she said, "and there isn't a soul at home. Something *has* happened."

"What has happened?"

"I don't know. Something. I had a warning last night. There wasn't a soul there. They've been sent for to Lincoln."

"Did you see anybody to ask?" asked Mrs. Dent with thinly concealed anxiety.

"I asked the woman that lives on the turn of the road. She's stone deaf. I suppose you know. She listened while I screamed at her to know where the Slocums were, and then she said, 'Mrs. Smith don't live here.' I didn't

see anybody on the road, and that's the only house. What do you suppose it means?"

"I don't suppose it means much of anything," replied Mrs. Dent coolly. "Mr. Slocum is conductor on the railroad, and he'd be away anyway, and Mrs. Slocum often goes early when he does, to spend the day with her sister in Porter's Falls. She'd be more likely to go away than Addie."

"And you don't think anything has happened?" Rebecca asked with diminishing distrust before the reasonableness of it.

"Land, no!"

Rebecca went upstairs to lay aside her coat and bonnet. But she came hurrying back with them still on.

"Who's been in my room?" she gasped. Her face was pale as ashes.

Mrs. Dent also paled as she regarded her.

"What do you mean?" she asked slowly.

"I found when I went upstairs that—little nightgown of—Agnes's on—the bed, laid out. It was—*laid out.* The sleeves were folded across the bosom, and there was that little red rose between them. Emeline, what is it? Emeline, what's the matter? Oh!"

Mrs. Dent was struggling for breath in great, choking gasps. She clung to the back of a chair. Rebecca, trembling herself so she could scarcely keep on her feet, got her some water.

As soon as she recovered herself Mrs. Dent

regarded her with eyes full of the strangest mixture of fear and horror and hostility.

"What do you mean talking so?" she said in a hard voice.

"It *is there*."

"Nonsense. You threw it down and it fell that way."

"It was folded in my bureau drawer."

"It couldn't have been."

"Who picked that red rose?"

"Look on the bush," Mrs. Dent replied shortly.

Rebecca looked at her; her mouth gaped. She hurried out of the room. When she came back her eyes seemed to protrude. (She had in the meantime hastened upstairs, and come down with tottering steps, clinging to the banisters.)

"Now I want to know what all this means?" she demanded.

"What what means?"

"The rose is on the bush, and it's gone from the bed in my room! Is this house haunted, or what?"

"I don't know anything about a house being haunted. I don't believe in such things. Be you crazy?" Mrs. Dent spoke with gathering force. The colour flashed back to her cheeks.

"No," said Rebecca shortly. "I ain't crazy yet, but I shall be if this keeps on much longer. I'm going to find out where that girl is before night."

Mrs. Dent eyed her.

"What be you going to do?"

"I'm going to Lincoln."

A faint, triumphant smile overspread Mrs. Dent's large face.

"You can't," said she; "there ain't any train."

"No train?"

"No; there ain't any afternoon train from the Falls to Lincoln."

"Then I'm going over to the Slocums' again to-night."

However, Rebecca did not go; such a rain came up as deterred even her resolution, and she had only her best dresses with her. Then in the evening came the letter from the Michigan village which she had left nearly a week ago. It was from her cousin, a single woman, who had come to keep her house while she was away. It was a pleasant, unexciting letter enough, all the first of it, and related mostly how she missed Rebecca; how she hoped she was having pleasant weather and kept her health; and how her friend, Mrs. Greenaway, had come to stay with her since she had felt lonesome the first night in the house; how she hoped Rebecca would have no objections to this, although nothing had been said about it, since she had not realised that she might be nervous alone. The cousin was painfully conscientious, hence the letter. Rebecca smiled in spite of her disturbed mind as she read it. Then her eye caught the postscript. That was in a different

hand, purporting to be written by the friend, Mrs. Hannah Greenaway, informing her that the cousin had fallen down the cellar stairs and broken her hip, and was in a dangerous condition, and begging Rebecca to return at once, as she herself was rheumatic and unable to nurse her properly, and no one else could be obtained.

Rebecca looked at Mrs. Dent, who had come to her room with the letter quite late; it was half-past nine, and she had gone upstairs for the night.

"Where did this come from?" she asked.

"Mr. Amblecrom brought it," she replied.

"Who's he?"

"The postmaster. He often brings the letters that come on the late mail. He knows I ain't anybody to send. He brought yours about your coming. He said he and his wife came over on the ferry-boat with you."

"I remember him," Rebecca replied shortly "There's bad news in this letter."

Mrs. Dent's face took on an expression of serious inquiry.

"Yes, my Cousin Harriet has fallen down the cellar stairs—they were always dangerous—and she's broken her hip, and I've got to take the first train home to-morrow."

"You don't say so. I'm dreadfully sorry."

"No, you ain't sorry!" said Rebecca, with a look as if she leaped. "You're glad. I don't know why, but you're glad. You've wanted to

get rid of me for some reason ever since I came. I don't know why. You're a strange woman. Now you've got your way, and I hope you're satisfied."

"How you talk."

Mrs. Dent spoke in a faintly injured voice, but there was a light in her eyes.

"I talk the way it is. Well, I'm going to-morrow morning, and I want you, just as soon as Agnes Dent comes home, to send her out to me. Don't you wait for anything. You pack what clothes she's got, and don't wait even to mend them, and you buy her ticket. I'll leave the money, and you send her along. She don't have to change cars. You start her off, when she gets home, on the next train!"

"Very well," replied the other woman. She had an expression of covert amusement.

"Mind you do it."

"Very well. Rebecca."

Rebecca started on her journey the next morning. When she arrived, two days later, she found her cousin in perfect health. She found, moreover, that the friend had not written the postscript in the cousin's letter. Rebecca would have returned to Ford Village the next morning, but the fatigue and nervous strain had been too much for her. She was not able to move from her bed. She had a species of low fever induced by anxiety and fatigue. But she could write, and she did, to the Slocums, and she received no answer. She also wrote to Mrs.

Dent; she even sent numerous telegrams, with no response. Finally she wrote to the postmaster, and an answer arrived by the first possible mail. The letter was short, curt, and to the purpose. Mr. Amblecrom, the postmaster, was a man of few words, and especially wary as to his expressions in a letter.

"Dear Madam," he wrote, "your favour rec'ed. No Slocums in Ford Village. All dead. Addie ten years ago, her mother two years later, her father five. House vacant. Mrs. John Dent said to have neglected stepdaughter. Girl was sick. Medicine not given. Talk of taking action. Not enough evidence. House said to be haunted. Strange sights and sounds. Your niece, Agnes Dent, died a year ago, about this time.

"Yours truly,
"THOMAS AMBLECROM."

THE GREAT CARBUNCLE

BY

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

AT nightfall, once in the olden time, on the rugged side of one of the Crystal Hills, a party of adventurers were refreshing themselves, after a toilsome and fruitless quest for the Great Carbuncle. They had come thither, not as friends nor partners in the enterprise, but each, save one youthful pair, impelled by his own selfish and solitary longing for this wondrous gem. Their feeling of brotherhood, however, was strong enough to induce them to contribute a mutual aid in building a rude hut of branches, and kindling a great fire of shattered pines that had drifted down the headlong current of the Amonoosuck, on the lower bank of which they were to pass the night. There was but one of their number, perhaps, who had become so estranged from natural sympathies, by the absorbing spell of the pursuit, as to acknowledge no satisfaction at the sight of human faces in the remote and solitary region whither they had ascended. A vast extent of wilderness lay between them and the nearest settlement, while scant a mile above their heads was that black verge where the hills throw off their shaggy

mantle of forest trees, and either robe themselves in clouds or tower naked into the sky. The roar of the Amonoosuck would have been too awful for endurance if only a solitary man had listened while the mountain stream talked with the wind.

The adventurers, therefore, exchanged hospitable greetings, and welcomed one another to the hut, where each man was the host, and all were the guests of the whole company. They spread their individual supplies of food on the flat surface of a rock, and partook of a general repast; at the close of which a sentiment of good-fellowship was perceptible among the party, though repressed by the idea that the renewed search for the Great Carbuncle must make them strangers again in the morning. Seven men and one young woman, they warmed themselves together at the fire, which extended its bright wall along the whole front of their wigwam. As they observed the various and contrasted figures that made up the assemblage, each man looking like a caricature of himself in the unsteady light that flickered over him, they came mutually to the conclusion that an odder society had never met, in city or wilderness, on mountain or plain.

The eldest of the group, a tall, lean, weather-beaten man, some sixty years of age, was clad in the skins of wild animals, whose fashion of dress he did well to imitate, since the deer, the wolf, and the bear had long been his most

intimate companions. He was one of those ill-fated mortals, such as the Indians told of, whom, in their early youth, the Great Carbuncle smote with a peculiar madness, and became the passionate dream of their existence. All who visited that region knew him as the Seeker, and by no other name. As none could remember when he first took up the search, there went a fable in the valley of the Saco, that, for his inordinate lust after the Great Carbuncle, he had been condemned to wander among the mountains till the end of time, still with the same feverish hopes at sunrise—the same despair at eve. Near this miserable Seeker sat a little, elderly personage, wearing a high-crowned hat, shaped somewhat like a crucible. He was from beyond the sea, a Doctor Cacaphodel, who had wilted and dried himself into a mummy by continually stooping over charcoal furnaces, and inhaling unwholesome fumes during his researches in chemistry and alchemy. It was told of him, whether truly or not, that, at the commencement of his studies, he had drained his body of all its richest blood, and wasted it, with other inestimable ingredients, in an unsuccessful experiment—and had never been a well man since. Another of the adventurers was Master Ichabod Pigsnort, a weighty merchant and selectman of Boston, and an elder of the famous Mr. Norton's church. His enemies had a ridiculous story that Master Pigsnort was accustomed to spend a whole hour

after prayer time, every morning and evening, in wallowing naked among an immense quantity of pine-tree shillings, which were the earliest silver coinage of Massachusetts. The fourth whom we shall notice had no name that his companions knew of, and was chiefly distinguished by a sneer that always contorted his thin visage, and by a prodigious pair of spectacles, which were supposed to deform and discolour the whole face of nature, to this gentleman's perception. The fifth adventurer likewise lacked a name, which was the greater pity, as he appeared to be a poet. He was a bright-eyed man, but woefully pined away, which was no more than natural, if, as some people affirmed, his ordinary diet was fog, morning mist, and a slice of the densest cloud within his reach, sauced with moonshine, whenever he could get it. Certain it is that the poetry which flowed from him had a smack of all these dainties. The sixth of the party was a young man of haughty mien, and sat somewhat apart from the rest, wearing his plumed hat loftily among his elders, while the fire glittered on the rich embroidery of his dress, and gleamed intensely on the jewelled pommel of his sword. This was the Lord de Vere, who, when at home, was said to spend much of his time in the burial vault of his dead progenitors, rummaging their mouldy coffins in search of all the earthly pride and vainglory that was hidden among bones and dust; so that, besides his own share, he had

the collected haughtiness of his whole line of ancestry.

Lastly, there was a handsome youth in rustic garb, and, by his side, a blooming little person, in whom a delicate shade of maiden reserve was just melting into the rich glow of a young wife's affection. Her name was Hannah, and her husband's Matthew; two homely names, yet well enough adapted to the simple pair, who seemed strangely out of place among the whimsical fraternity whose wits had been set agog by the Great Carbuncle.

Beneath the shelter of one hut, in the bright blaze of the same fire, sat this varied group of adventurers, all so intent upon a single object that, of whatever else they began to speak, their closing words were sure to be illuminated with the Great Carbuncle. Several related the circumstances that brought them thither. One had listened to a traveller's tale of this marvellous stone in his own distant country, and had immediately been seized with such a thirst for beholding it as could only be quenched in its intensest lustre. Another, so long ago as when the famous Captain Smith visited these coasts, had seen it blazing far at sea, and had felt no rest in all the intervening years till now that he took up the search. A third, being encamped on a hunting expedition full forty miles south of the White Mountains, awoke at midnight, and beheld the Great Carbuncle gleaming like a meteor, so that the shadows of the trees fell back-

ward from it. They spoke of the innumerable attempts which had been made to reach the spot, and of the singular fatality which had hitherto withheld success from all adventurers, though it might seem so easy to follow to its source a light that overpowered the moon and almost matched the sun. It was observable that each smiled scornfully at the madness of every other in anticipating better fortune than the past, yet nourished a scarcely hidden conviction that he would himself be the favoured one. As if to allay their too sanguine hopes, they recurred to the Indian traditions that a spirit kept watch about the gem, and bewildered those who sought it either by removing it from peak to peak of the higher hills, or by calling up a mist from the enchanted lake over which it hung. But these tales were deemed unworthy of credit, all professing to believe that the search had been baffled by want of sagacity or perseverance in the adventurers, or such other causes as might naturally obstruct the passage to any given point among the intricacies of forest, valley, and mountain.

In a pause of the conversation, the wearer of the prodigious spectacles looked round upon the party, making each individual, in turn, the object of the sneer which invariably dwelt upon his countenance.

"So, fellow-pilgrims," said he, "here we are, seven wise men, and one fair damsel—who, doubtless, is as wise as any graybeard of the

company: here we are, I say, all bound on the same goodly enterprise. Methinks, now, it were not amiss that each of us declare what he proposes to do with the Great Carbuncle, provided he have the good hap to clutch it. What says our friend in the bear skin? How mean you, good sir, to enjoy the prize which you have been seeking, the Lord knows how long, among the Crystal Hills?"

"How enjoy it!" exclaimed the aged Seeker, bitterly. "I hope for no enjoyment from it; that folly has passed long ago! I keep up the search for this accursed stone because the vain ambition of my youth has become a fate upon me in old age. The pursuit alone is my strength —the energy of my soul—the warmth of my blood—and the pith and marrow of my bones! Were I to turn my back upon it, I should fall down dead on the hither side of the Notch, which is the gateway of this mountain region. Yet not to have my wasted lifetime back again would I give up my hopes of the Great Carbuncle! Having found it, I shall bear it to a certain cavern that I wot of, and there, grasping it in my arms, lie down and die, and keep it buried with me forever."

"O wretch, regardless of the interests of science!" cried Doctor Cacaphodel, with philosophic indignation. "Thou art not worthy to behold, even from afar off, the lustre of this most precious gem that ever was concocted in the laboratory of Nature. Mine is the sole

purpose for which a wise man may desire the possession of the Great Carbuncle. Immediately on obtaining it—for I have a presentiment, good people, that the prize is reserved to crown my scientific reputation—I shall return to Europe, and employ my remaining years in reducing it to its first elements. A portion of the stone will I grind to impalpable powder; other parts shall be dissolved in acids, or whatever solvents will act upon so admirable a composition; and the remainder I design to melt in the crucible, or set on fire with the blowpipe. By these various methods, I shall gain an accurate analysis, and finally bestow the result of my labours upon the world in a folio volume."

"Excellent!" quoth the man with the spectacles. "Nor need you hesitate, learned sir, on account of the necessary destruction of the gem, since the perusal of your folio may teach every mother's son of us to concoct a Great Carbuncle of his own."

"But, verily," said Master Ichabod Pigsnort, "for mine own part, I object to the making of these counterfeits, as being calculated to reduce the marketable value of the true gem. I tell ye frankly, sirs, I have an interest in keeping up the price. Here have I quitted my regular traffic, leaving my warehouse in the care of my clerks, and putting my credit to great hazard, and, furthermore, have put myself in peril of death or captivity by the accursed heathen savages—and all this without daring to ask

the prayers of the congregation, because the quest for the Great Carbuncle is deemed little better than a traffic with the Evil One. Now think ye that I would have done this grievous wrong to my soul, body, reputation, and estate, without a reasonable chance of profit?"

"Not I, pious Master Pigsnort," said the man with the spectacles. "I never laid such a great folly to thy charge."

"Truly, I hope not," said the merchant. "Now, as touching this Great Carbuncle, I am free to own that I have never had a glimpse of it; but, be it only the hundredth part so bright as people tell, it will surely outvalue the Great Mogul's best diamond, which he holds at an incalculable sum. Wherefore, I am minded to put the Great Carbuncle on shipboard, and voyage with it to England, France, Spain, Italy, or into Heathendom, if Providence should send me thither, and, in a word, dispose of the gem to the best bidder among the potentates of the earth, that he may place it among his crown jewels. If any of ye have a wiser plan, let him expound it."

"That have I, thou sordid man!" exclaimed the poet. "Dost thou desire nothing brighter than gold, that thou wouldst transmute all this ethereal lustre into such dross as thou wallowest in already? For myself, hiding the jewel under my cloak, I shall hie me back to my attic chamber, in one of the darksome alleys of London. There, night and day, will I gaze upon it; my

soul shall drink its radiance; it shall be diffused throughout my intellectual powers, and gleam brightly in every line of poesy that I indite. Thus, long ages after I am gone, the splendour of the Great Carbuncle will blaze around my name!"

"Well said, Master Poet!" cried he of the spectacles. "Hide it under thy cloak, sayest thou? Why, it will gleam through the holes, and make thee look like a jack-o'-lantern!"

"To think!" ejaculated the Lord de Vere, rather to himself than his companions, the best of whom he held utterly unworthy of his intercourse—"to think that a fellow in a tattered cloak should talk of conveying the Great Carbuncle to a garret in Grub Street! Have not I resolved within myself that the whole earth contains no fitter ornament for the great hall of my ancestral castle? There shall it flame for ages, making a noonday of midnight, glittering on the suits of armour, the banners, and escutcheons that hang around the wall, and keeping bright the memory of heroes. Wherefore have all other adventurers sought the prize in vain but that I might win it, and make it a symbol of the glories of our lofty line? And never, on the diadem of the White Mountains, did the Great Carbuncle hold a place half so honoured as is reserved for it in the hall of the De Veres!"

"It is a noble thought," said the Cynic, with an obsequious sneer. "Yet, might I presume to say so, the gem would make a rare sepulchral

lamp, and would display the glories of your lordship's progenitors more truly in the ancestral vault than in the castle hall."

"Nay, forsooth," observed Matthew, the young rustic, who sat hand in hand with his bride, "the gentleman has bethought himself of a profitable use for this bright stone. Hannah here and I are seeking it for a like purpose."

"How, fellow!" exclaimed his lordship, in surprise. "What castle hall hast thou to hang it in?"

"No castle," replied Matthew, "but as neat a cottage as any within sight of the Crystal Hills. Ye must know, friends, that Hannah and I, being wedded the last week, have taken up the search of the Great Carbuncle, because we shall need its light in the long winter evenings; and it will be such a pretty thing to show the neighbours when they visit us. It will shine through the house so that we may pick up a pin in any corner, and will set all the windows aglowing as if there were a great fire of pine knots in the chimney. And then how pleasant, when we awake in the night, to be able to see one another's faces!"

There was a general smile among the adventurers at the simplicity of the young couple's project in regard to this wondrous and invaluable stone, with which the greatest monarch on earth might have been proud to adorn his palace. Especially the man with spectacles, who had sneered at all the company in turn, now twisted

his visage into such an expression of ill-natured mirth that Matthew asked him, rather peevishly, what he himself meant to do with the Great Carbuncle.

"The Great Carbuncle!" answered the Cynic, with ineffable scorn. "Why, you blockhead, there is no such thing in *rerum natura.* I have come three thousand miles, and am resolved to set my foot on every peak of these mountains, and poke my head into every chasm, for the sole purpose of demonstrating to the satisfaction of any man one whit less an ass than thyself that the Great Carbuncle is all a humbug!"

Vain and foolish were the motives that had brought most of the adventurers to the Crystal Hills; but none so vain, so foolish, and so impious, too, as that of the scoffer with the prodigious spectacles. He was one of those wretched and evil men whose yearnings are downward to the darkness, instead of heavenward, and who, could they but extinguish the lights which God hath kindled for us, would count the midnight gloom their chiefest glory. As the Cynic spoke, several of the party were startled by a gleam of red splendour that showed the huge shapes of the surrounding mountains and the rock-bestrewn bed of the turbulent river with an illumination unlike that of their fire on the trunks and black boughs of the forest trees. They listened for the roll of thunder, but heard nothing, and were glad that the tempest came not near them. The stars, those dial-points of heaven, now warned

the adventurers to close their eyes on the blazing logs, and open them, in dreams, to the glow of the Great Carbuncle.

The young married couple had taken their lodgings in the farthest corner of the wigwam, and were separated from the rest of the party by a curtain of curiously woven twigs, such as might have hung, in deep festoons, around the bridal-bower of Eve. The modest little wife had wrought this piece of tapestry while the other guests were talking. She and her husband fell asleep with hands tenderly clasped, and awoke from visions of unearthly radiance to meet the more blessed light of each other's eyes. They awoke at the same instant, and with a happy smile beaming over their two faces, which grew brighter with their consciousness of the reality of life and love. But no sooner did she recollect where they were than the bride peeped through the interstices of the leafy curtain, and saw that the outer room of the hut was deserted.

"Up, dear Matthew!" cried she, in haste. "The strange folk are all gone! Up, this very minute, or we shall lose the Great Carbuncle!"

In truth, so little did these poor young people deserve the mighty prize which had lured them thither that they had slept peacefully all night, and till the summits of the hills were glittering with sunshine; while the other adventurers had tossed their limbs in feverish wakefulness, or

dreamed of climbing precipices, and set off to realise their dreams with the earliest peep of dawn. But Matthew and Hannah, after their calm rest, were as light as two young deer, and merely stopped to say their prayers and wash themselves in a cold pool of the Amonoosuck, and then to taste a morsel of food, ere they turned their faces to the mountain-side. It was a sweet emblem of conjugal affection, as they toiled up the difficult ascent, gathering strength from the mutual aid which they afforded. After several little accidents, such as a torn robe, a lost shoe, and the entanglement of Hannah's hair in a bough, they reached the upper verge of the forest, and were now to pursue a more adventurous course. The innumerable trunks and heavy foliage of the trees had hitherto shut in their thoughts, which now shrank affrighted from the region of wind and cloud and naked rocks and desolate sunshine that rose immeasurably above them. They gazed back at the obscure wilderness which they had traversed, and longed to be buried again in its depths rather than trust themselves to so vast and visible a solitude.

"Shall we go on?" said Matthew, throwing his arm round Hannah's waist, both to protect her and to comfort his heart by drawing her close to it.

But the little bride, simple as she was, had a woman's love of jewels, and could not forego the hope of possessing the very brightest in the

world, in spite of the perils with which it must be won.

"Let us climb a little higher," whispered she, yet tremulously, as she turned her face upward to the lonely sky.

"Come, then," said Matthew, mustering his manly courage and drawing her along with him, for she became timid again the moment that he grew bold.

And upward, accordingly, went the pilgrims of the Great Carbuncle, now treading upon the tops and thickly interwoven branches of dwarf pines, which, by the growth of centuries, though mossy with age, had barely reached three feet in altitude. Next, they came to masses and fragments of naked rock heaped confusedly together, like a cairn reared by giants in memory of a giant chief. In this bleak realm of upper air, nothing breathed, nothing grew; there was no life but what was concentrated in their two hearts; they had climbed so high that Nature herself seemed no longer to keep them company. She lingered beneath them, within the verge of the forest trees, and sent a farewell glance after her children as they strayed where her own green footprints had never been. But soon they were to be hidden from her eye. Densely and dark the mists began to gather below, casting black spots of shadow on the vast landscape, and sailing heavily to one centre, as if the loftiest mountain peak had summoned a council of its kindred clouds. Finally, the vapours welded

themselves, as it were, into a mass, presenting the appearance of a pavement over which the wanderers might have trodden, but where they would vainly have sought an avenue to the blessed earth which they had lost. And the lovers yearned to behold that green earth again more intensely, alas! than, beneath a clouded sky, they had ever desired a glimpse of heaven. They even felt it a relief to their desolation when the mists, creeping gradually up the mountain, concealed its lonely peak, and thus annihilated, at least for them, the whole region of visible space. But they drew closer together, with a fond and melancholy gaze, dreading lest the universal cloud should snatch them from each other's sight.

Still, perhaps, they would have been resolute to climb as far and as high, between earth and heaven, as they could find foothold, if Hannah's strength had not begun to fail, and with that her courage also. Her breath grew short. She refused to burden her husband with her weight, but often tottered against his side, and recovered herself each time by a feebler effort. At last she sank down on one of the rocky steps of the acclivity.

"We are lost, dear Matthew," said she mournfully. "We shall never find our way to the earth again. And, oh, how happy we might have been in our cottage!"

"Dear heart!—we shall yet be happy there," answered Matthew. "Look! In this direction,

the sunshine penetrates the dismal mist. By its aid I can direct our course to the passage of the Notch. Let us go back, love, and dream no more of the Great Carbuncle!"

"The sun cannot be yonder," said Hannah, with despondence. "By this time, it must be noon. If there could ever be any sunshine here, it would come from above our heads."

"But look!" repeated Matthew, in a somewhat altered tone. "It is brightening every moment. If not sunshine, what can it be?"

Nor could the young bride any longer deny that a radiance was breaking through the mist, and changing its dim hue to a dusky red, which continually grew more vivid, as if brilliant particles were interfused with the gloom. Now, also, the cloud began to roll away from the mountain, while, as it heavily withdrew, one object after another started out of its impenetrable obscurity into sight, with precisely the effect of a new creation, before the indistinctness of the old chaos had been completely swallowed up. As the process went on, they saw the gleaming of water close at their feet, and found themselves on the very border of a mountain lake, deep, bright, clear, and calmly beautiful, spreading from brim to brim of a basin that had been scooped out of the solid rock. A ray of glory flashed across its surface. The pilgrims looked whence it should proceed, but closed their eyes with a thrill of awful admiration, to exclude the fervid splendour that glowed

from the brow of a cliff impending over the enchanted lake. For the simple pair had reached that lake of mystery, and found the long-sought shrine of the Great Carbuncle!

They threw their arms around each other, and trembled at their own success; for, as the legends of this wondrous gem rushed thick upon their memory, they felt themselves marked out by fate—and the consciousness was fearful. Often from childhood upward they had seen it shining like a distant star. And now that star was throwing its intensest lustre on their hearts. They seemed changed to one another's eyes, in the red brilliancy that flamed upon their cheeks, while it lent the same fire to the lake, the rocks and sky, and to the mists which had rolled back before its power. But with their next glance they beheld an object that drew their attention even from the mighty stone. At the base of the cliff, directly beneath the Great Carbuncle, appeared the figure of a man, with his arms extended in the act of climbing, and his face turned upward, as if to drink the full gush of splendour. But he stirred not, no more than if changed to marble.

"It is the Seeker," whispered Hannah, convulsively grasping her husband's arm. "Matthew, he is dead."

"The joy of success has killed him," replied Matthew, trembling violently. "Or, perhaps, the very light of the Great Carbuncle was death!"

"The Great Carbuncle," cried a peevish voice behind them. "The Great Humbug! If you have found it, prithee point it out to me."

They turned their heads, and there was the Cynic, with his prodigious spectacles set carefully on his nose, staring now at the lake, now at the rocks, now at the distant masses of vapour, now right at the Great Carbuncle itself, yet seemingly as unconscious of its light as if all the scattered clouds were condensed about his person Though its radiance actually threw the shadow of the unbeliever at his own feet, as he turned his back upon the glorious jewel, he would not be convinced that there was the least glimmer there.

"Where is your Great Humbug?" he repeated. "I challenge you to make me see it!"

"There," said Matthew, incensed at such perverse blindness, and turning the Cynic round toward the illuminated cliff. "Take off those abominable spectacles, and you cannot help seeing it!"

Now these coloured spectacles probably darkened the Cynic's sight in at least as great a degree as the smoked glasses through which people gaze at an eclipse. With resolute bravado, however, he snatched them from his nose, and fixed a bold stare full upon the ruddy blaze of the Great Carbuncle. But scarcely had he encountered it, when, with a deep, shuddering groan, he dropped his head, and pressed both hands across his miserable eyes. Thenceforth

there was, in very truth, no light of the Great Carbuncle, nor any other light on earth, nor light of heaven itself, for the poor Cynic. So long accustomed to view all objects through a medium that deprived them of every glimpse of brightness, a single flash of so glorious a phenomenon, striking upon his naked vision, had blinded him forever.

"Matthew," said Hannah, clinging to him, "let us go hence!"

Matthew saw that she was faint, and kneeling down, supported her in his arms, while he threw some of the thrillingly cold water of the enchanted lake upon her face and bosom. It revived her, but could not renovate her courage.

"Yes, dearest!" cried Matthew, pressing her tremulous form to his breast, "we will go hence, and return to our humble cottage. The blessed sunshine and the quiet moonlight shall come through our window. We will kindle the cheerful glow of our hearth at eventide, and be happy in its light. But never again will we desire more light than all the world may share with us."

"No," said his bride, "for how could we live by day, or sleep by night, in this awful blaze of the Great Carbuncle!"

Out of the hollow of their hands they drank each a draught from the lake, which presented them its waters uncontaminated by an earthly lip. Then, lending their guidance to the blinded Cynic, who uttered not a word, and even stifled

his groans in his own most wretched heart, they began to descend the mountain. Yet, as they left the shore, till then untrodden, of the spirit's lake, they threw a farewell glance toward the cliff, and beheld the vapours gathering in dense volumes, through which the gem burned duskily.

As touching the other pilgrims of the Great Carbuncle, the legend goes on to tell that the worshipful Master Ichabod Pigsnort soon gave up the quest as a desperate speculation, and wisely resolved to betake himself again to his warehouse, near the town dock, in Boston. But, as he passed through the Notch of the mountain, a war party of Indians captured our unlucky merchant, and carried him to Montreal, there holding him in bondage till, by the payment of a heavy ransom, he had woefully subtracted from his hoard of pine-tree shillings. By his long absence, moreover, his affairs had become so disordered that, for the rest of his life, instead of wallowing in silver, he had seldom a sixpence worth of copper. Doctor Cacaphodel, the alchemist, returned to his laboratory with a prodigious fragment of granite, which he ground to powder, dissolved in acids, melted in the crucible, and burned with the blowpipe, and published the result of his experiments in one of the heaviest folios of the day. And, for all these purposes, the gem itself could not have answered better than the granite. The poet, by a somewhat similar mistake, made prize of a great piece of ice, which he found in a sunless

chasm of the mountains, and swore that it corresponded, in all points, with his idea of the Great Carbuncle. The critics say that, if his poetry lacked the splendour of the gem, it retained all the coldness of the ice. The Lord de Vere went back to his ancestral hall, where he contented himself with a wax-lighted chandelier, and filled, in due course of time, another coffin in the ancestral vault. As the funeral torches gleamed within that dark receptacle, there was no need of the Great Carbuncle to show the vanity of earthly pomp.

The cynic, having cast aside his spectacles, wandered about the world, a miserable object, and was punished with an agonising desire of light, for the wilful blindness of his former life. The whole night long he would lift his splendour-blasted orbs to the moon and stars; he turned his face eastward, at sunrise, as duly as a Persian idolater; he made a pilgrimage to Rome, to witness the magnificent illumination of St. Peter's Church; and, finally, perished in the great fire of London, into the midst of which he had thrust himself, with the desperate idea of catching one feeble ray from the blaze that was kindling earth and heaven.

Matthew and his bride spent many peaceful years, and were fond of telling the legend of the Great Carbuncle. The tale, however, toward the close of their lengthened lives, did not meet with the full credence that had been accorded to it by those who remembered the ancient

lustre of the gem. For it is affirmed that, from the hour when two mortals had shown themselves so simply wise as to reject a jewel which would have dimmed all earthly things, its splendour waned. When other pilgrims reached the cliff, they found only an opaque stone, with particles of mica glittering on its surface. There is also a tradition that, as the youthful pair departed, the gem was loosened from the forehead of the cliff, and fell into the enchanted lake, and that at noontide the Seeker's form may still be seen to bend over its quenchless gleam.

Some few believe that this inestimable stone is blazing as of old, and say that they have caught its radiance, like a flash of summer lightning, far down the valley of the Saco. And be it owned that, many a mile from the Crystal Hills, I saw a wondrous light around their summits, and was lured, by the faith of poesy, to be the latest pilgrim of the GREAT CARBUNCLE.

THE GOOSEHERD

BY

HERMANN SUDERMANN

THE tendencies of the democratic temperament play unpleasant tricks on the intellect. Idealistic self-deception in regard to the inner life of men, assuming all to possess equal depth and delicacy of feeling—this, especially, sets at naught honest endeavour to see things as they really are. You may affirm that between the emotional attitudes of the various social classes toward life there is no profound difference. Life contradicts you with daily instances. Ah, if we were actually all alike in these fundamental respects, then would life have the fairness of a dream! All your ideals of equality and brotherhood—mere mental cobwebs to the confirmed aristocrat—would come true; nay, they would be true even now, for a little more or less of knowledge could hardly separate the natures of men by a distance so measureless.

But, as a fact, it is precisely this very real chasm between their modes of feeling which, more effectually than all differences of wealth, or rank, or knowledge, forever divides the cultured few from the masses. They pass through life side by side, yet with as little comprehension

of each other as though they inhabited different stars. And woe unto whoever seeks to span the abyss.

It is so easy to doubt this fact without having had a real, and perhaps bitter, experience of it. Let me relate the story of my first love. My first love! He was a gooseherd—a live gooseherd of flesh and blood. No, I am not jesting, for the sorrow that he caused me wrung bitter tears from me, although I was then long grown up—a highly respectable young lady.

It is true that, in the days when he first set my heart afire, I was still in that period of life when one's highest felicity consists in going barefoot. I was eight years old, he was ten; I was the little daughter of the manor-house, he was the blacksmith's son.

Of a morning, when with my mother and my grown brother I was taking coffee on the veranda, he would drive his geese past us, and then vanish in the direction of the heath. At first he merely stared at us in simple astonishment. It would never have occurred to him to lift his cap, had my brother not impressed it upon him that it was becoming to offer us a morning salutation. From that time on he waved his cap in a large semicircle, and cried out a mechanical "Good-morning to ye," which he seemed to have learned by rote.

Whenever my brother was in a good humour, I was permitted to bring the gooseherd a buttered bun, to show our appreciation of his

urbanity. He always tore the bun from my hand with a certain greedy fear, as if there were some danger of my retracting the gift.

I remember just how he looked. The picture is very clear to me. His straight, fair hair hung down over his sunburned cheeks like the edges of a straw roof, and from under it his blue eyes peeped out sly and merry at once. He had turned up his tattered trousers at the knee, and in his hand he held a slender willow switch, into the green rind of which he had skilfully cut a spiral succession of white rings.

My childish desire first fixed itself upon this switch. I thought it infinitely desirable to be able to hold in my hand this wondrous thing that was fashioned so differently from all my playthings. And when I went on to imagine what it would be to drive the geese with it, and to go barefoot, I had built up my perfect ideal of earthly bliss. It was this switch, too, that brought us nearer to each other. One morning when I was drinking my coffee, and saw him going by so merrily, I could restrain myself no longer. I took up the honey sandwich that I was to eat, slipped away, and ran after him.

When he saw me coming toward him, he stopped, and looked at me in astonishment. But when he saw the honey sandwich in my hand, his eyes gleamed with perfect comprehension.

"Will you give me your switch?" I asked.

"No; why?" he asked in his turn. He balanced himself on one leg, which he scratched with the other foot.

"Because I want it!" I answered defiantly, and then added in a milder tone, "You see, I'll give you my honey sandwich."

For a moment his eye was fixed covetously on the dainty, but at last he thought better of it. "No; I've got to drive the geese with it. But I'll make you another like it."

"Can you do that yourself?" I asked, full of admiration.

"Oh, that's nothing much," and he laughed contemptuously. "I can make flutes and dancing men."

I was so ravished by these accomplishments that I gave him the honey sandwich without more ado. He took a hearty bite from it, and, without considering me worthy of another glance, drove on his feathery folk.

With a heart full of envy, I looked after him. He could drive the geese, while I had to go up-stairs to Mademoiselle and memorise French words. How unevenly happiness is distributed in this world, I thought to myself. That evening, he brought me the promised switch, whose beauty surpassed the imaginings of my boldest dreams. It had not only the white rings of its prototype with which I had been so taken, but on its lower end there was a round knob, upon which, by means of two points, one vertical and one horizontal line, a human face

was delineated—whether mine or his I could not guess. But oh, I was happy!

From that time on we were friends. I shared with him all the dainty morsels that were my portion at home; he, in return, gave me the various works of art which his nimble fingers fashioned. There were flutes, and little boxes, houses, dolls' furniture, but, above all, those famous dancing men of his, with which I soon became a terror to every one in the house.

Our meetings took place every evening behind the goose-stall. There we exchanged our gifts. The whole day I lived in anticipation of this moment, and my thoughts were busy with my young hero. I saw him lying in the grass on the sunny heath, blowing his flute, while I was tortured with wretched French lessons, and ever stronger grew my yearning to partake of the bliss which consisted in watching geese. When I communicated my feelings to him, he laughed out loud and said:

"Why don't you come with me?"

That was decisive, and without taking further thought I answered, "I'll come to-morrow!"

"But don't forget to bring something to eat!" my friend admonished me.

All circumstances were favourable. Mademoiselle was afflicted with a nervous headache at the propitious moment, and postponed our lesson. I sat at the breakfast-table, feverish with joy and fear, and waited for him to pass

by. My pockets were stuffed with all manner of sweet things that I had begged from the housekeeper, and next to me lay the switch which should to-day be employed in the duties of its natural office. And then he came! He blinked slyly at me while he cried out his "Good morning to ye!" As soon as I could escape, without being noticed, I was after him.

"What have you brought with you?" was his first question.

"Two jam cakes, three sandwiches, a bun, and a gooseberry tart," I answered, as I revealed these good things. He immediately began to eat, while I, with scarcely suppressed cries of joy, proudly drove the geese before us. From the fir woods, whose borders I knew from my walks, we came into unfamiliar regions: dwarfed underbrush that formed an uncanny thicket on either side of the road arose, till suddenly the wide heath rolled out its endless expanse before me. Ah, how beautiful that was, how beautiful! Far as the eye could reach, a sea of grass and many-coloured flowers. The grassy mole-hills stretched along like frozen waves. The hot air quivered and danced over the airy heath. The bees hummed their music, and high in the dark-blue heaven stood the golden sun. At the edge of the wood lay a morass dotted with puddles of thick, grayish-yellow water that shimmered dimly. Weeds floated on it, and all around upon the earth, that was so moist that bubbles of water oozed from

the grass, were delicate traceries made by the feet of the geese, so that the ground was like a patterned carpet.

Here was the flock's paradise. Here we halted, and, while the geese wallowed comfortably in the puddles, we chased each other on the heath, caught yellow butterflies, and picked bilberries.

Then we played at being man and wife. "Elise," the gentlest of the geese, was our child. For hours we alternately caressed and whipped the poor bird, until at last its exertions succeeded, and it freed itself. Then I prepared a meal for my husband. I untied my white apron, spread it like a table-cloth on the grass, and arranged on it the remnants of our supplies. He sat down with dignity, and it made me half mad with delight to see with what rapidity he despatched one morsel after another.

As in a dream, the hours ran by The sun rose higher and higher, until its glowing beams slanted no longer, but burned straight down upon us. My head felt confused, and a dull weariness overcame me. I also felt considerable hunger, because my "husband" had left nothing for me. My mouth was dry; my lips burned as if I had a fever. To cool them, I plucked moist grass and pressed it against my mouth.

All at once from far, far beyond the wood came the faint sound of bells. It was the dinner-hour at home, and I, too, was called to table by the ringing. And if I were missed—oh,

Lord, what would become of me! I threw myself on the grass, and sobbed bitterly, while my companion, trying to comfort me, passed his rough hands over my face and neck. Suddenly I jumped up, and ran, as if driven by furies, in the direction of the wood. Weeping, I wandered about in the thicket for perhaps two hours. Then I heard voices calling my name, and in a moment I was in my brother's arms.

Next morning, my poor friend appeared as seducer before the severe tribunal of his overlords. He took it as a matter of course that the punishment should fall on him, and made no effort to roll from his shoulders the full burden of guilt. With entire equanimity, he received the punishment that my brother applied. Then, with a wistful smile, he rubbed his aching back against a post on the veranda, and hurried away. Sobbing aloud, I threw myself on the ground.

From that day forth, I loved him. I invented a thousand means by which to hold my secret meetings with him; I was as greedy as a magpie, that he might refresh himself with the results of my thieving. I smothered him with caresses, to make up for the blows of that terrible horsewhip. He accepted my love calmly, and showed his gratitude by a touching faithfulness and a healthy appetite.

Six months later, fate separated us.

My poor mother, who had long been ill, was

advised by her physicians to go south. She placed her affairs entirely in my brother's hands, and went to the Riviera, whither I accompanied her.

. . . . . .

Nine years passed before I saw my home again. The return was sadder than I had ever thought possible. In Berlin, where I had lived since my mother's death, a stubborn brain fever had attacked me, and kept me on my sickbed for many weeks. Although the skill of my physician had kept death from me, I had, from a blooming young girl, become a frail and pallid shadow. I was told to seek strength in country air and amid the firs; and so I was put into the train and transported to my brother's estate. I must have been a pitiful sight enough, for when I was lifted from the carriage I saw bright tears in the eyes of our old tenants.

It is a strange feeling to be at home once more after long wanderings, and all the stranger if one has suffered much out in the world. An exquisite balm comes over the soul. We try to efface all traces left by the joys or sorrows that the world has offered us. We strive to become children once more, and to conjure from its grave the magic of perished days. Sitting in my arm-chair, and letting my tired eyes rest upon the familiar fields, one shadow after another seemed to come to life again, but first amid that motley crowd stood—my dear, sunny-haired gooseherd.

"What has become of him?" I asked my brother, and received the pleasant answer that he had grown up to be a handsome, busy young fellow, well fitted to take the place of his old father, the smith.

I felt my heart beat quickly. I tried to be angry at my own folly, but without success. The dear old memories would not be quieted. So at last I submitted to their sway, and pictured our first meeting to myself with all the magic of an old romance.

A few days after my arrival, I was permitted to drive out for the first time. I was then lifted from my carriage, and put down out in the wood, in a quiet place on the soft moss. I had chosen the spot with care, for from it one could see the smithy where the playmate of my youth lived. My brother wished to remain with me, but I begged him not to put himself out, for the little servant girl who accompanied me would be protection enough from any annoyances. And who, indeed, was to molest me in the peaceful woods of my home?

So my brother drove away, promising to come for me within two hours. Then I sent my little maid away, too. She was to pick wild strawberries, but to remain near by. She ran off in high glee.

I was alone, thank Heaven! Now I could dream to my heart's content. The fir-trees murmured over my head, and from the smithy rung the resonant strokes of the hammer.

The fire glowed in the forge, and from time to time a dark figure glided before it. It must be he. I did not weary of following the movements of his arms. I admired his strength, but trembled for him when the red iron-shavings flew about him.

The time sped on. In the midst of my dreamy observations I was aroused by my brother. He had come to take me home.

"Well, are you tired of waiting?" he asked kindly.

Smiling, I shook my head, and tried to rise a little, but sank back again.

"Hm, hm," he said thoughtfully; "I left the coachman at home, because I thought that I should be able to lift you into the carriage alone. But the seat is high, and I can hardly get you there without hurting you. You, Grete," and he turned to the little girl, who had promptly put in an appearance at the sound of the carriage, "run over to the smith —the young one; you know him—and tell him to come and help me."

He threw a copper coin on the ground, which the little one picked up joyfully before she ran away.

I felt the hot blood rising to my cheeks. I was to see him again—at this very moment—and he was to be my good Samaritan. I pressed my hand to my throbbing heart, and waited until—until——

Yes, there he was! How strong and hand-

some he had grown to be! His thick, fair hair blew about his smoke-stained face, and on his strong chin grew a silky young beard. Thus the young Siegfried must have looked when he was apprenticed to the evil Mime. Awkwardly he grasped his little cap which sat pertly on the back of his head. But with a smile I offered him my hand, and asked, "How are you?"

"How should I be? Well!" he answered with an embarrassed laugh, and carefully wiped his blackened hand on his leather apron before taking mine.

"Help me lift the young lady into the carriage," said my brother.

He wiped his hands again, and seized me, not very gently, under my arms. My brother lifted my feet, and in a moment I lay upon the cushions of the carriage.

"Thank you; thank you," I said, and nodded to him with a smile.

He remained standing by the carriage, and kept turning his cap in his hands, quite embarrassed. With uncertain looks he gazed, now at me, now at my brother.

There is something in him striving for utterance, I said to myself. Why, indeed, should it not be so? At the sight of me, all his old memories have awakened. He would speak with me of those happy times when, in the innocence of our childhood, we drove the geese together. Ah, he dares not speak! The presence of his

master weighs on him — I must help him a little.

"Well, what are you thinking of?" I asked, and looked kindly and encouragingly into his eyes.

My brother, who had been busy with the horses, turned round, and scanned the smith's face.

"To be sure, you want something for your trouble!" he said, and put his hand into his pocket.

I felt as if I had been struck across the face with a whip. "For Heaven's sake, Max!" I stammered, while I felt myself growing hot and cold by turns.

My brother did not hear me, and handed him—yes, he dared to do it—a silver Mark.

I seemed to see the friend of my youth hurl back the coin. I gathered all my strength to rise, to stretch out my hands, to prevent the misfortune from happening. But — what was that? No—impossible—and yet I saw it with my own eyes: he took the coin—he said "Thank you"—he nodded—he turned on his heel—he went——

And I? I stared after him as if he had been a vile spectre. Wearily sighing, I sank back into the cushions.

And thus I said farewell to the dream of my youth.

WANDERING WILLIE'S TALE

(From "Redgauntlet")

BY

SIR WALTER SCOTT

YE maun have heard of Sir Robert Redgauntlet of that Ilk, who lived in these parts before the dear years. The country will lang mind him; and our fathers used to draw breath thick if ever they heard him named. He was out wi' the Hielandmen in Montrose's time; and again he was in the hills wi' Glencairn in the saxteen hundred and fifty-twa; and sae when King Charles the Second came in, wha was in sic favour as the Laird of Redgauntlet? He was knighted at Lonon court, wi' the King's ain sword; and being a red-hot prelatist, he came down here, rampauging like a lion, with commissions of lieutenancy (and of lunacy, for what I ken), to put down a' the Whigs and Covenanters in the country. Wild wark they made of it; for the Whigs were as dour as the Cavaliers were fierce, and it was which should first tire the other. Redgauntlet was aye for the strong hand; and his name is kenn'd as wide in the country as Claverhouse's or Tam Dalyell's. Glen, nor dargle, nor mountain, nor

cave could hide the puir Hill-folk when Redgauntlet was out with bugle and bloodhound after them, as if they had been sae mony deer. And troth when they fand them, they didna mak muckle mair ceremony than a Hielandman wi' a roebuck. It was just, "Will ye tak the test?" If not, "Make ready—present—fire!" and there lay the recusant.

Far and wide was Sir Robert hated and feared. Men thought he had a direct compact with Satan; that he was proof against steel, and that bullets happed aff his buff-coat like hailstanes from a hearth; that he had a mear that would turn a hare on the side of Carrifra Gauns —and muckle to the same purpose, of whilk mair anon. The best blessing they wared on him was, "Deil scowp wi' Redgauntlet!" He wasna a bad maister to his ain folk though, and was weel aneugh liked by his tenants; and as for the lackies and troopers that raid out wi' him to the persecutions, as the Whigs ca'd those killing times, they wad hae drunken themsells blind to his health at ony time.

Now ye are to ken that my gudesire lived on Redgauntlet's grund; they ca' the place Primrose Knowe. We had lived on the grund, and under the Redgauntlets, since the riding days, and lang before. It was a pleasant bit; and I think the air is callerer and fresher there than onywhere else in the country. It's a' deserted now; and I sat on the broken door-cheek three days since, and was glad I couldna

see the plight the place was in; but that's a' wide o' the mark. There dwelt my gudesire, Steenie Steenson, a rambling, rattling chiel he had been in his young days, and could play weel on the pipes; he was famous at "Hoopers and Girders," a' Cumberland couldna touch him at "Jockie Lattin," and he had the finest finger for the backlilt between Berwick and Carlisle. The like o' Steenie wasna the sort that they made Whigs o'. And so he became a Tory, as they ca' it, which we now ca' Jacobites, just out of a kind of needcessity, that he might belang to some side or other. He had nae ill-will to the Whig bodies, and liked little to see the blude rin, though, being obliged to follow Sir Robert in hunting and hosting, watching and warding, he saw muckle mischief, and maybe did some, that he couldna avoid.

Now Steenie was a kind of favourite with his master, and kenn'd a' the folks about the castle, and was often sent for to play the pipes when they were at their merriment. Auld Dougal MacCallum, the butler, that had followed Sir Robert through gude and ill, thick and thin, pool and stream, was specially fond of the pipes, and aye gae my gudesire his gude word wi' the laird; for Dougal could turn his master round his finger.

Weel, round came the Revolution, and it had like to have broken the hearts baith of Dougal and his master. But the change was not a'thegither sae great as they feared, and other

folk thought for. The Whigs made an unco crawing what they wad do with their auld enemies, and in special wi' Sir Robert Redgauntlet. But there were ower mony great folks dipped in the same doings to mak a spick and span new warld. So Parliament passed it a' ower easy; and Sir Robert, bating that he was held to hunting foxes instead of Covenanters, remained just the man he was. His revel was as loud, and his hall as weel lighted, as ever had been, though maybe he lacked the fines of the Nonconformists, that used to come to stock his larder and cellar; for it is certain he began to be keener about the rents than his tenants used to find him before, and they behoved to be prompt to the rent-day, or else the laird wasna pleased. And he was sic an awsome body that naebody cared to anger him; for the oaths he swore, and the rage that he used to get into, and the looks that he put on, made men sometimes think him a devil incarnate.

Weel, my gudesire was nae manager—no that he was a very great misguider—but he hadna the saving gift, and he got twa terms' rent in arrear. He got the first brash at Whitsunday put ower wi' fair word and piping; but when Martinmas came, there was a summons from the grund-officer to come wi' the rent on a day preceese, or else Steenie behoved to flit. Sair wark he had to get the siller; but he was weel-freended, and at last he got the haill scraped thegither—a thousand merks; the maist

of it was from a neighbour they ca'd Laurie Lapraik—a sly tod. Laurie had walth o' gear—could hunt wi' the hound and rin wi' the hare—and be Whig or Tory, saunt or sinner, as the wind stood. He was a professor in this Revolution warld; but he liked an orra sough of this warld, and a tune on the pipes weel aneugh at a bye-time; and abune a' he thought he had gude security for the siller he lent my gudesire ower the stocking at Primrose Knowe.

Away trots my gudesire to Redgauntlet Castle, wi' a heavy purse and a light heart, glad to be out of the laird's danger. Weel, the first thing he learned at the castle was that Sir Robert had fretted himsell into a fit of the gout, because he did not appear before twelve o'clock. It wasna a'thegither for sake of the money, Dougal thought; but because he didna like to part wi' my gudesire aff the grund. Dougal was glad to see Steenie, and brought him into the great oak parlour, and there sat the laird his leesome lane, excepting that he had beside him a great ill-favoured jackanape, that was a special pet of his—a cankered beast it was, and mony an ill-natured trick it played; ill to please it was, and easily angered—ran about the haill castle, chattering and yowling, and pinching and biting folk, especially before ill weather, or disturbances in the state. Sir Robert ca'd it Major Weir, after the warlock that was burnt; and few folk liked either the name or the conditions of the creature—they thought there was

something in it by ordinar—and my gudesire was not just easy in mind when the door shut on him, and he saw himself in the room wi' naebody but the laird, Dougal MacCallum, and the major, a thing that hadna chanced to him before.

Sir Robert sat, or, I should say, lay, in a great armed chair, wi' his grand velvet gown, and his feet on a cradle; for he had baith gout and gravel, and his face looked as gash and ghastly as Satan's. Major Weir sat opposite to him, in a red laced coat, and the laird's wig on his head; and aye as Sir Robert girned wi' pain, the jackanape girned too, like a sheep's-head between a pair of tangs—an ill-faured, fearsome couple they were. The laird's buff-coat was hung on a pin behind him, and his broadsword and his pistols within reach; for he keepit up the auld fashion of having the weapons ready, and a horse saddled day and night, just as he used to do when he was able to loup on horseback, and away after ony of the Hill-fok he could get speerings of. Some said it was for fear of the Whigs taking vengeance, but I judge it was just his auld custom—he wasna gien to fear onything. The rental-book, wi' its black cover and brass clasps, was lying beside him; and a book of sculduggery sangs was put betwixt the leaves, to keep it open at the place where it bore evidence against the goodman of Primrose Knowe, as behind the hand with his mails and duties. Sir Robert gave my gudesire a look as if he

would have withered his heart in his bosom. Ye maun ken he had a way of bending his brows that men saw the visible mark of a horse-shoe in his forehead, deep-dinted, as if it had been stamped there.

"Are ye come light-handed, ye son of a toom whistle?" said Sir Robert. "Zounds! if you are——"

My gudesire, with as gude a countenance as he could put on, made a leg, and placed the bag of money on the table wi' a dash, like a man that does something clever. The laird drew it to him hastily. "Is it all here, Steenie, man?"

"Your honour will find it right," said my gudesire.

"Here, Dougal," said the laird, "gie Steenie a tass of brandy downstairs, till I count the siller and write the receipt."

But they werena out of the room when Sir Robert gied a yelloch that garr'd the castle rock. Back ran Dougal—in flew the livery-men—yell on yell gied the laird, ilk ane mair awfu' than the ither. My gudesire knew not whether to stand or flee, but he ventured back into the parlour, where a' was gaun hirdie-girdie—naebody to say "come in" or "gae out." Terribly the laird roared for cauld water to his feet, and wine to cool his throat; and "Hell, hell, hell, and its flames," was aye the word in his mouth. They brought him water, and when they plunged his swoln feet into the tub, he cried out it was

burning; and folk say that it *did* bubble and sparkle like a seething cauldron. He flung the cup at Dougal's head, and said he had given him blood instead of burgundy; and, sure aneugh, the lass washed clotted blood aff the carpet the neist day. The jackanape they ca'd Major Weir, it jibbered and cried as if it was mocking its master. My gudesire's head was like to turn: he forgot baith siller and receipt, and downstairs he banged; but as he ran, the shrieks came faint and fainter; there was a deep-drawn shivering groan, and word gaed through the castle that the laird was dead.

Weel, away came my gudesire wi' his finger in his mouth, and his best hope was that Dougal had seen the money-bag, and heard the laird speak of writing the receipt. The young laird, now Sir John, came from Edinburgh to see things put to rights. Sir John and his father never gree'd weel. Sir John had been bred an advocate, and afterwards sat in the last Scots Parliament and voted for the Union, having gotten, it was thought, a rug of the compensations; if his father could have come out of his grave he would have brained him for it on his awn hearthstane. Some thought it was easier counting with the auld rough knight than the fair-spoken young ane—but mair of that anon.

Dougal MacCallum, poor body, neither grat nor graned, but gaed about the house looking like a corpse, but directing, as was his duty, a' the order of the grand funeral. Now, Dougal

looked aye waur and waur when night was coming, and was aye the last to gang to his bed, whilk was in a little round just opposite the chamber of dais, whilk his master occupied while he was living, and where he now lay in state, as they ca'd it, weel-a-day! The night before the funeral, Dougal could keep his awn counsel nae langer: he came doun with his proud spirit, and fairly asked auld Hutcheon to sit in his room with him for an hour. When they were in the round, Dougal took ae tass of brandy to himsell and gave another to Hutcheon, and wished him all health and lang life, and said that, for himsell, he wasna lang for this world; for that, every night since Sir Robert's death, his silver call had sounded from the state chamber, just as it used to do at nights in his lifetime, to call Dougal to help to turn him in his bed. Dougal said that, being alone with the dead on that floor of the tower (for naebody cared to wake Sir Robert Redgauntlet like another corpse), he had never daured to answer the call, but that now his conscience checked him for neglecting his duty; for, "though death breaks service," said MacCallum, "it shall never break my service to Sir Robert; and I will answer his next whistle, so be you will stand by me, Hutcheon."

Hutcheon had nae will to work, but he had stood by Dougal in battle and broil, and he wad not fail him at this pinch; so down the carles sat ower a stoup of brandy, and Hutcheon, who

was something of a clerk, would have read a chapter of the Bible; but Dougal would hear naething but a blaud of Davie Lindsay, whilk was the waur preparation.

When midnight came, and the house was quiet as the grave, sure aneugh the silver whistle sounded as sharp and shrill as if Sir Robert was blowing it, and up gat the twa auld serving-men and tottered into the room where the dead man lay. Hutcheon saw aneugh at the first glance; for there were torches in the room, which showed him the foul fiend in his ain shape, sitting on the laird's coffin! Ower he couped as if he had been dead. He could not tell how lang he lay in a trance at the door, but when he gathered himself he cried on his neighbour, and getting nae answer, raised the house, when Dougal was found lying dead within twa steps of the bed where his master's coffin was placed. As for the whistle, it was gaen anes and aye; but mony a time was it heard at the top of the house on the bartizan, and amang the auld chimneys and turrets, where the howlets have their nests. Sir John hushed the matter up, and the funeral passed over without mair bogle-wark.

But when a' was ower, and the laird was beginning to settle his affairs, every tenant was called up for his arrears, and my gudesire for the full sum that stood him in the rental-book. Weel, away he trots to the castle, to tell his story, and there he is introduced to Sir John,

sitting in his father's chair, in deep mourning, with weepers and hanging cravat, and a small walking rapier by his side, instead of the auld broadsword that had a hundredweight of steel about it, what with blade, chape, and basket-hilt. I have heard their communing so often tauld ower, that I almost think I was there mysell, though I couldna be born at the time.

"I wuss ye joy, sir, of the head seat, and the white loaf, and the braid lairdship. Your father was a kind man to friends and followers; muckle grace to you, Sir John, to fill his shoon—his boots, I suld say, for he seldom wore shoon, unless it were muils when he had the gout."

"Ay, Steenie," quoth the laird, sighing deeply, and putting his napkin to his een, "his was a sudden call, and he will be missed in the country; no time to set his house in order: weel prepared Godward, no doubt, which is the root of the matter, but left us behind a tangled hesp to wind, Steenie. Hem! hem! We maun go to business, Steenie; much to do, and little time to do it in."

Here he opened the fatal volume. I have heard of a thing they call Doomsday Book—I am clear it has been a rental of back-ganging tenants.

"Stephen," said Sir John, still in the same soft, sleekit tone of voice—"Stephen Stevenson, or Steenson, ye are down here for a year's rent behind the hand, due at last term."

Stephen. "Please your honour, Sir John, I paid it to your father."

Sir John. "Ye took a receipt then, doubtless, Stephen, and can produce it?"

Stephen. "Indeed I hadna time, an it like your honour; for nae sooner had I set doun the siller, and just as his honour Sir Robert, that's gaen, drew it till him to count it, and write out the receipt, he was ta'en wi' the pains that removed him."

"That was unlucky," said Sir John, after a pause. "But ye maybe paid it in the presence of somebody. I want but a *talis qualis* evidence, Stephen. I would go ower strictly to work with no poor man."

Stephen. "Troth, Sir John, there was naebody in the room but Dougal MacCallum, the butler. But, as your honour kens, he has e'en followed his auld master."

"Very unlucky again, Stephen," said Sir John, without altering his voice a single note. "The man to whom ye paid the money is dead; and the man who witnessed the payment is dead too; and the siller, which should have been to the fore, is neither seen nor heard tell of in the repositories. How am I to believe a' this?"

Stephen. "I dinna ken, your honour; but there is a bit memorandum note of the very coins—for, God help me! I had to borrow out of twenty purses—and I am sure that ilka man there set down will take his grit oath for what purpose I borrowed the money."

Sir John. "I have little doubt ye *borrowed* the money, Steenie. It is the *payment* to my father that I want to have some proof of."

Stephen. "The siller maun be about the house, Sir John. And since your honour never got it, and his honour that was canna have ta'en it wi' him, maybe some of the family may have seen it."

Sir John. "We will examine the servants, Stephen; that is but reasonable."

But lackey and lass, and page and groom, all denied stoutly that they had ever seen such a bag of money as my gudesire described. What was waur, he had unluckily not mentioned to any living soul of them his purpose of paying his rent. Ae quean had noticed something under his arm, but she took it for the pipes.

Sir John Redgauntlet ordered the servants out of the room, and then said to my gudesire, "Now, Steenie, ye see you have fair play; and, as I have little doubt ye ken better where to find the siller than any other body, I beg, in fair terms, and for your own sake, that you will end this fasherie; for, Stephen, ye maun pay or flit."

"The Lord forgie your opinion," said Stephen, driven almost to his wit's end—"I am an honest man."

"So am I, Stephen," said his honour; "and so are all the folks in the house, I hope. But if there be a knave amongst us, it must be he that tells the story he cannot prove." He paused, and then added, mair sternly: "If I understand

your trick, sir, you want to take advantage of some malicious reports concerning things in this family, and particularly respecting my father's sudden death, thereby to cheat me out of the money, and perhaps take away my character, by insinuating that I have received the rent I am demanding. Where do you suppose this money to be? I insist upon knowing."

My gudesire saw everything look sae muckle against him that he grew nearly desperate; however, he shifted from one foot to another, looked to every corner of the room, and made no answer.

"Speak out, sirrah," said the laird, assuming a look of his father's—a very particular ane, which he had when he was angry: it seemed as if the wrinkles of his frown made that selfsame fearful shape of a horse's shoe in the middle of his brow—"speak out, sir! I *will* know your thoughts. Do you suppose that I have this money?"

"Far be it frae me to say so," said Stephen.

"Do you charge any of my people with having taken it?"

"I wad be laith to charge them that may be innocent," said my gudesire; "and if there be any one that is guilty, I have nae proof."

"Somewhere the money must be, if there is a word of truth in your story," said Sir John; "I ask where you think it is, and demand a correct answer?"

"In hell, if you *will* have my thoughts of it,"

said my gudesire, driven to extremity—"in hell! with your father, his jackanape, and his silver whistle."

Down the stairs he ran, for the parlour was nae place for him after such a word, and he heard the laird swearing blood and wounds behind him, as fast as ever did Sir Robert, and roaring for the bailie and the baron-officer.

Away rode my gudesire to his chief creditor, him they ca'd Laurie Lapraik, to try if he could make onything out of him; but when he tauld his story, he got but the warst word in his wame—thief, beggar, and dyvour were the safest terms; and to the boot of these hard terms, Laurie brought up the auld story of his dipping his hand in the blood of God's saunts, just as if a tenant could have helped riding with the laird, and that a laird like Sir Robert Redgauntlet. My gudesire was by this time far beyond the bounds of patience, and while he and Laurie were at deil speed the liars, he was wanchancie aneugh to abuse Lapraik's doctrine as weel as the man, and said things that garr'd folks' flesh grue that heard them; he wasna just himsell, and he had lived wi' a wild set in his day.

At last they parted, and my gudesire was to ride hame through the wood of Pitmurkie, that is a' fou of black firs, as they say. I ken the wood, but the firs may be black or white for what I can tell. At the entry of the wood there is a wild common, and on the edge of the common a little lonely change-house, that was keepit

then by a hostler-wife—they suld hae ca'd her Tibbie Faw—and there puir Steenie cried for a muchkin of brandy, for he had had no refreshment the haill day. Tibbie was earnest wi' him to take a bite o' meat, but he couldna think o't, nor would he take his foot out of the stirrup, and took off the brandy wholly at twa draughts, and named a toast at each—the first was, the memory of Sir Robert Redgauntlet, and might he never lie quiet in his grave till he had righted his poor bond-tenant; and the second was, a health to Man's Enemy, if he would but get him back the pock of siller, or tell him what came o't, for he saw the haill world was like to regard him as a thief and a cheat, and he took that waur than even the ruin of his house and hauld

On he rode, little caring where. It was a dark night turned, and the trees made it yet darker, and he let the beast take its ain road through the wood; when, all of a sudden, from tired and wearied that it was before, the nag began to spring, and flee, and stend, that my gudesire could hardly keep the saddle; upon the whilk, a horseman, suddenly riding up beside him, said, "That's a mettle beast of yours, freend; will you sell him?" So saying, he touched the horse's neck with his riding-wand, and it fell into its auld heigh-ho of a stumbling trot. "But his spunk's soon out of him, I think," continued the stranger, "and that is like mony a man's courage,

WILSON
MACKENZIE
SCOTT
CRABB
WORDSWORTH
LOCKHART
JEFFREY
FERGUSON
ALLEN
MOORE
WILKIE
CONSTABLE
CAMPBELL

SIR WALTER SCOTT AND HIS LITERARY FRIENDS AT ABBOTTSFORD

that thinks he wad do great things till he come to the proof."

My gudesire scarce listened to this, but spurred his horse, with "Gude e'en to you, freend."

But it's like the stranger was ane that doesna lightly yield his point; for, ride as Steenie liked, he was aye beside him at the selfsame pace. At last my gudesire, Steenie Steenson, grew half angry, and, to say the truth, half feared.

"What it is that ye want with me, freend?" he said. "If ye be a robber, I have nae money; if ye be a leal man, wanting company, I have nae heart to mirth or speaking; and if ye want to ken the road, I scarce ken it mysell."

"If you will tell me your grief," said the stranger, "I am one that, though I have been sair misca'd in the world, am the only hand for helping my freends."

So my gudesire, to ease his ain heart, mair than from any hope of help, told him the story from beginning to end.

"It's a hard pinch," said the stranger; "but I think I can help you."

"If you could lend the money, sir, and take a lang day—I ken nae other help on earth," said my gudesire.

"But there may be some under the earth," said the stranger. "Come, I'll be frank wi' you; I could lend you the money on bond, but you would maybe scruple my terms. Now, I can tell you that your auld laird is disturbed in

his grave by your curses, and the wailing of your family, and if ye daur venture to go to see him, he will give you the receipt."

My gudesire's hair stood on end at this proposal, but he thought his companion might be some humorsome chield that was trying to frighten him, and might end with lending him the money. Besides, he was bauld wi' brandy, and desperate wi' distress; and he said he had courage to go to the gate of hell, and a step farther, for that receipt.

The stranger laughed.

Weel, they rode on through the thickest of the wood, when, all of a sudden, the horse stopped at the door of a great house; and, but that he knew the place was ten miles off, my father would have thought he was at Redgauntlet Castle. They rode into the outer courtyard, through the muckle faulding yetts, and aneath the auld portcullis; and the whole front of the house was lighted, and there were pipes and fiddles, and as much dancing and deray within as used to be in Sir Robert's house at Pace and Yule, and such high seasons. They lap off, and my gudesire, as seemed to him, fastened his horse to the very ring he had tied him to that morning when he gaed to wait on the young Sir John.

"God!" said my gudesire, "if Sir Robert's death be but a dream!"

He knocked at the ha' door just as he was wont, and his auld acquaintance, Dougal

MacCallum, just after his wont, too, came to open the door, and said, "Piper Steenie, are ye there, lad? Sir Robert has been crying for you."

My gudesire was like a man in a dream; he looked for the stranger, but he was gane for the time. At last he just tried to say, "Ha! Dougal Driveower, are ye living? I thought ye had been dead."

"Never fash yoursell wi' me," said Dougal, "but look to yoursell; and see ye tak naething frae onybody, neither meat, drink, or siller, except just the receipt that is your ain."

So saying, he led the way out through halls and trances that were weel kenn'd to my gudesire, and into the auld oak parlour; and there was as much singing of profane sangs, and birling of red wine, and speaking blasphemy and sculduddry, as had ever been in Redgauntlet Castle when it was at the blythest.

But, Lord take us in keeping! what a set of ghastly revellers they were that sat round that table! My gudesire kenn'd mony that had long before gane to their place, for often had he piped to the most part in the hall of Redgauntlet. There was the fierce Middleton, and the dissolute Rothes, and the crafty Lauderdale; and Dalyell with his bald head and a beard to his girdle; and Earlshall, with Cameron's blude on his hand; wild Bonshaw, that tied blessed Mr. Cargill's limbs till the blude sprung; and Dumbarton Douglas, the twice-turned traitor baith to country and king. There was the Bluidy

Advocate MacKenyie, who, for his worldly wit and wisdom, had been to the rest as a god. And there was Claverhouse, as beautiful as when he lived, with his long, dark, curled locks, streaming down over his laced buff-coat, and his left hand always on his right spule-blade, to hide the wound that the silver bullet had made. He sat apart from them all, and looked at them with a melancholy, haughty countenance; while the rest hallooed, and sung, and laughed, that the room rang. But their smiles were fearfully contorted from time to time; and their laughter passed into such wild sounds as made my gudesire's nails grow blue, and chilled the marrow in his banes.

They that waited at the table were just the wicked serving-men and troopers that had done their work and cruel bidding on earth. There was the Lang Lad of the Nethertown, that helped to take Argyle; and the bishop's summoner, that they called the Deil's Rattle-bag; and the wicked guardsmen, in their laced coats; and the savage Highland Amorites, that shed blood like water; and mony a proud serving-man, haughty of heart and bloody of hand, cringing to the rich, and making them wickeder than they would be; grinding the poor to powder, when the rich had broken them to fragments. And mony, mony mair were coming and ganging, a' as busy in their vocation as if they had been alive.

Sir Robert Redgauntlet, in the midst of a

this fearful riot, cried, wi' a voice like thunder, on Steenie Piper to come to the board-head where he was sitting, his legs stretched out before him, and swathed up with flannel, with his holster pistols aside him, while the great broadsword rested against his chair, just as my gudesire had seen him the last time upon earth—the very cushion for the jackanape was close to him, but the creature itsell was not there; it wasna its hour, it's likely; for he heard them say as he came forward, "Is not the major come yet?" And another answered, "The jackanape will be here betimes the morn." And when my gudesire came forward, Sir Robert, or his ghaist, or the deevil in his likeness, said, "Weel, piper, hae ye settled wi' my son for the year's rent?"

With much ado my father gat breath to say that Sir John would not settle without his honour's receipt.

"Ye shall hae that for a tune of the pipes, Steenie," said the appearance of Sir Robert. "Play us up, 'Weel hoddled, Luckie.'"

Now this was a tune my gudesire learned frae a warlock, that heard it when they were worshipping Satan at their meetings, and my gudesire had sometimes played it at the ranting suppers in Redgauntlet Castle, but never very willingly; and now he grew cauld at the very name of it, and said, for excuse, he hadna his pipes wi' him.

"MacCallum, ye limb of Beelzebub," said the

fearfu' Sir Robert, "bring Steenie the pipes that I am keeping for him!"

MacCallum brought a pair of pipes that might have served the piper of Donald of the Isles. But he gave my gudesire a nudge as he offered them; and looking secretly and closely, Steenie saw that the chanter was of steel, and heated to a white heat; so he had fair warning not to trust his fingers with it. So he excused himself again, and said he was faint and frightened, and had not wind enough to fill the bag.

"Then ye maun eat and drink, Steenie," said the figure; "for we do little else here; and it's ill speaking between a fou man and a fasting."

Now these were the very words that the bloody Earl of Douglas said to keep the king's messenger in hand, while he cut the head off MacLellan of Bombie, at the Threave Castle, and that put Steenie mair and mair on his guard. So he spoke up like a man, and said he came neither to eat, or drink, or make minstrelsy, but simply for his ain—to ken what was come o' the money he had paid, and to get a discharge for it; and he was so stout-hearted by this time, that he charged Sir Robert for conscience' sake (he had no power to say the holy name), and as he hoped for peace and rest, to spread no snares for him, but just to give him his ain.

The appearance gnashed its teeth and laughed, but it took from a large pocket-book the receipt, and handed it to Steenie. "There is your

receipt, ye pitiful cur; and for the money, my dog-whelp of a son may go look for it in the Cat's Cradle."

My gudesire uttered mony thanks, and was about to retire when Sir Robert roared aloud: "Stop though, thou sack-doudling son of a whore! I am not done with thee. Here we do nothing for nothing; and you must return on this very day twelvemonth to pay your master the homage that you owe me for my protection."

My father's tongue was loosed of a suddenty, and he said aloud: "I refer mysell to God's pleasure, and not to yours."

He had no sooner uttered the word than all was dark around him, and he sunk on the earth with such a sudden shock, that he lost both breath and sense.

How lang Steenie lay there he could not tell, but when he came to himsell he was lying in the auld kirkyard of Redgauntlet parochine, just at the door of the family aisle, and the scutcheon of the auld knight, Sir Robert, hanging over his head. There was a deep morning fog on grass and gravestane around him, and his horse was feeding quietly beside the minister's twa cows. Steenie would have thought the whole was a dream, but he had the receipt in his hand, fairly written and signed by the auld laird; only the last letters of his name were a little disorderly, written like one seized with sudden pain.

Sorely troubled in his mind, he left that dreary place, rode through the mist to Red-

gauntlet Castle, and with much ado he got speech of the laird.

"Well, you dyvour bankrupt," was the first word, "have you brought me my rent?"

"No," answered my gudesire, "I have not: but I have brought your honour Sir Robert's receipt for it."

"How, sirrah? Sir Robert's receipt! You told me he had not given you one."

"Will your honour please to see if that bit line is right?"

Sir John looked at every line, and at every letter, with much attention, and at last at the date, which my gudesire had not observed—"'From my appointed place,' he read, 'this twenty-fifth of November.' What! That is yesterday! Villain, thou must have gone to Hell for this!"

"I got it from your honour's father; whether he be in Heaven or Hell, I know not," said Steenie.

"I will delate you for a warlock to the privy council!" said Sir John. "I will send you to your master, the devil, with the help of a tar-barrel and a torch!"

"I intend to delate mysell to the presbytery," said Steenie, "and tell them all I have seen last night, whilk are things fitter for them to judge of than a borrel man like me."

Sir John paused, composed himsell, and desired to hear the full history; and my gudesire told it him from point to point, as I have told it you—word for word, neither more nor less.

Sir John was silent again for a long time, and at last he said, very composedly: "Steenie, this story of yours concerns the honour of many a noble family besides mine; and if it be a leasing-making, to keep yourself out of my danger, the least you can expect is to have a red-hot iron driven through your tongue, and that will be as bad as scauding your fingers with a red-hot chanter. But yet it may be true, Steenie; and if the money cast up, I shall not know what to think of it. But where shall we find the Cat's Cradle? There are cats enough about the old house, but I think they kitten without the ceremony of bed or cradle."

"We were best ask Hutcheon," said my gudesire; "he kens a' the odd corners about as weel as—another serving-man that is now gane, and that I wad not like to name."

Aweel, Hutcheon, when he was asked, told them that a ruinous turret, lang disused, next to the clock-house, only accessible by a ladder, for the opening was on the outside, and far above the battlements, was called of old the Cat's Cradle.

"There will I go immediately," said Sir John; and he took (with what purpose, Heaven kens) one of his father's pistols from the hall-table, where they had lain since the night he died, and hastened to the battlements.

It was a dangerous place to climb, for the ladder was auld and frail, and wanted ane or twa rounds. However, up got Sir John, and

entered at the turret door, where his body stopped the only little light that was in the bit turret. Something flees at him wi' a vengeance, maist dang him back ower; bang gaed the knight's pistol, and Hutcheon, that held the ladder, and my gudesire that stood beside him, hears a loud skelloch. A minute after, Sir John flings the body of the jackanape down to them, and cries that the siller is fund, and that they should come up and help him. And there was the bag of siller sure aneugh, and mony orra things besides that had been missing for mony a day. And Sir John, when he had riped the turret weel, led my gudesire into the dining-parlour, and took him by the hand, and spoke kindly to him, and said he was sorry he should have doubted his word, and that he would hereafter be a good master to him, to make amends.

"And now, Steenie," said Sir John, "although this vision of yours tends, on the whole, to my father's credit, as an honest man, that he should, even after his death, desire to see justice done to a poor man like you, yet you are sensible that ill-dispositioned men might make bad constructions upon it, concerning his soul's health. So, I think, we had better lay the haill dirdum on that ill-deedie creature, Major Weir, and say naething about your dream in the wood of Pitmurkie. You had taken ower muckle brandy to be very certain about onything; and, Steenie, this receipt (his hand shook while he held it out),

it's but a queer kind of document, and we will do best, I think, to put it quietly in the fire."

"Od, but for as queer as it is, it's a' the voucher I have for my rent," said my gudesire, who was afraid, it may be, of losing the benefit of Sir Robert's discharge.

"I will bear the contents to your credit in the rental-book, and give you a discharge under my own hand," said Sir John, "and that on the spot. And, Steenie, if you can hold your tongue about this matter, you shall sit, from this term downward, at an easier rent."

"Mony thanks to your honour," said Steenie, who saw easily in what corner the wind was; "doubtless I will be conformable to all your honour's commands; only I would willingly speak wi' some powerful minister on the subject, for I do not like the sort of soumons of appointment whilk your honour's father——"

"Do not call the phantom my father!" said Sir John, interrupting him.

"Weel, then, the thing that was so like him," said my gudesire; "he spoke of my coming back to him this time twelvemonth, and it's a weight on my conscience."

"Aweel, then," said Sir John, "if you be so much distressed in mind, you speak to our minister of the parish; he is a douce man, regards the honour of our family, and the mair that he may look for some patronage from me."

Wi' that my gudesire readily agreed that the receipt should be burnt, and the laird threw it

into the chimney with his ain hand. Burn it would not for them, though; but away it flew up the lum, wi' a lang train of sparks at its tail, and a hissing noise like a squib.

My gudesire gaed down to the manse, and the minister, when he had heard the story, said it was his real opinion that, though my gudesire had gaen very far in tampering with dangerous matters, yet, as he had refused the devil's arles (for such was the offer of meat and drink), and had refused to do homage by piping at his bidding, he hoped, that if he held a circumspect walk hereafter, Satan could take little advantage by what was come and gane. And, indeed, my gudesire, of his ain accord, lang forswore baith the pipes and the brandy; it was not even till the year was out, and the fatal day passed, that he would so much as take the fiddle, or drink usquebaugh or tippenny.

Sir John made up his story about the jack-anape as he liked himsell; and some believe till this day there was no more in the matter than the filching nature of the brute. Indeed, ye'll no hinder some to threap that it was nane o' the Auld Enemy that Dougal and Hutcheon saw in the laird's room, but only that wanchancie creature, the mayor, capering on the coffin; and that, as to the blawing on the laird's whistle that was heard after he was dead, the filthy brute could do that as weel as the laird himsell, if no better. But Heaven kens the truth, whilk first came out by the minister's wife after Sir

John and her ain gudeman were baith in the moulds. And then, my gudesire, wha was failed in his limbs, but not in his judgment or memory—at least nothing to speak of—was obliged to tell the real narrative to his freends for the credit of his good name. He might else have been charged for a warlock.

But they had baith to sup the sauce o't sooner or later. What was fristed wasna forgiven. Sir John died before he was much over threescore; and it was just like of a moment's illness. And for my gudesire, though he departed in fulness of years, yet there was my father, a yauld man of forty-five, fell down betwixt the stilts of his plough, and raise never again, and left nae bairn but me, a puir sightless, fatherless, motherless creature, could neither work nor want. Things gaed weel aneugh at first; for Sir Redwald Redgauntlet, the only son of Sir John, and the oye of auld Sir Robert, and, wae's me! the last of the honourable house, took the farm off our hands, and brought me into his household to have care of me. He liked music, and I had the best teachers baith England and Scotland could gie me. Mony a merry year was I wi' him; but wae's me! he gaed out with other pretty men in the Forty-five—— I'll say nae mair about it.

THE COMET

BY

ÉMILE ERCKMANN AND ALEXANDRE CHATRIAN

LAST year, before the festivities of the carnival, the news reached Hunebourg that the world was coming to an end. The unpleasant information was first spread by Dr. Zacharias Piper, of Colmar. He had read it in the "Lame Messenger," in the "Perfect Christian," and in half a hundred other almanacs.

The doctor's calculations amounted to this: that on Shrove Tuesday a comet would descend from heaven; that it would have a tail consisting of boiling water, thirty-five millions of leagues in length, with which it would sweep the earth, causing the snow on the mountain-tops to be melted, the trees to be dried up, and the people to be consumed.

A worthy scholar of Paris, M. Popinot, it is true, affirmed a little later that, though the comet would undoubtedly come, its tail would be composed of such thin and harmless vapours that it would trouble no one; so that every one could go quietly about his business. For the truth of this assertion he made himself answerable, and, indeed, it calmed all fears. But, unfortunately, we have living at Hunebourg,

In the Three-Pots Lane, an old wool-spinner, named Maria Finck. She is a small, wrinkled, white-haired old woman, whom people consult in all the delicate affairs of life. She lives in a low room, the ceiling of which is hung with painted eggs, little chains of red, blue, and gilded nuts, and a thousand other curious things. She wears old-fashioned furbelows, and lives on buns—facts which give her a great reputation throughout the country.

Maria Finck, instead of approving the opinion of good, honest M. Popinot, took sides with Dr. Zacharias Piper, saying:

"Pray and repent of your sins; make your peace with Heaven. For the end is near; the end is near!"

At one end of her room you may see a picture of hell, whither people descend upon a road strewn with roses. Not one suspects the real direction of the road; but some go dancing and swinging a bottle, and others hold a ham or a string of sausages, while a fiddler, in beribboned hat, plays a tune to make the journey merrier. Some of these people are joyfully embracing, and all are carelessly approaching a flaming chimney, into which the foremost are already falling, with arms extended and legs in air.

Imagine the reflections of all reasonable beings on seeing this representation. Not one of us is so virtuous but he has a certain number of sins on his conscience, and no one can flatter himself that he will be placed immediately at

the right hand of the Lord. No, it would be very presumptuous to imagine that things will turn out like that; it would be a sign of very condemnable pride. So most people said, "We will have no carnival, but spend Shrove Tuesday in acts of contrition."

Never was the like seen before. The adjutant and the captain of the place, as well as the sergeants and corporals of the Third Company of the —th, in garrison at Hunebourg, were really in despair. All the preparations for the feast such as the great town-hall, that had been decorated with plants and with military trophies, the stage that had been raised for the orchestra, the beer, the Kirschwasser, the Bischoffs, which had been ordered for the refreshment hall—in a word, all the good things would be entirely lost, simply because the girls of the town would not hear of dancing.

"I am not wicked," said Sergeant Duchêne, "but if I had hold of that Dr. Zacharias Piper of yours, it would fare ill with him."

But the most disappointed mortals were Daniel Spitz, the secretary of the mayoralty, Jérôme Bertha, the post-master's son, the tax-collector Dujardin, and myself. We had travelled to Strasbourg a week before to get costumes. In order that nothing should be wanting, Uncle Toby had given me fifty francs out of his own pocket. I had chosen my get-up as Pierrot at Mlle. Dardenai's in the arcades. This costume consisted of a shirt with large folds and huge

sleeves. The latter were adorned with onion-shaped buttons as large as one's fist, and one could toss them from chin to thigh. One covered his head with a black cap, whitened his face with powder, and, provided one had a long nose, cheeks hollowed, and well-shaded eyes, it was admirable.

Dujardin, because of his large paunch, had chosen a Turk's costume embroidered at all the seams. Spitz had a Punch's coat made up of a thousand bits of red, green, and yellow, a hump in front, another behind, and a big policeman's hat, set well back on his head—you never saw anything handsomer. Jérôme Bertha was to be a savage, with parrot feathers. We were sure, first of all, that the girls would desert the soldiers for us, and, when one has gone to such expense, to see everything going to the deuce on account of an old fool like Dr. Zacharias Piper—why, it's enough to make one hate one's kind. But, then, what can you expect? People have always been the same, and the fools always have the best of it.

Shrove Tuesday came, with a sky full of snow. People gazed to the right, to the left, above, below—no comet! The girls looked confused, the boys ran to their cousins, aunts, or god-mothers, to all the houses: "Do you see now that old woman Finck is crazy," they cried, "and all your ideas about the comet mere folly? Do comets ever come in winter? Don't they always appear in vintage-time? Come,

come, we must decide something, and, the deuce there is still time enough!"

As for the sergeant and corporals, they went into the kitchens, exhorted the servants, and loaded them with reproaches, so that a few recovered their courage. Old men and women came to see the great hall of the mayoralty, and to admire the suns between the windows, made of sabres and daggers, and little tri-coloured flags. There came a change. All remembered that it was Shrove Tuesday. The young girls hastened to get their frocks out of their wardrobes, and waxed their little shoes. At ten o'clock, the great town-hall was thronged. We had won the battle, and not a young girl in all the town was missing at that roll-call. The clarionets, the trombones, and the big drum resounded, the high windows shone out into the night, the waltzers spun round like mad, and the country dances went on merrily. The girls and boys were jubilant beyond words, and the old grandmothers sat comfortably near the stove, and laughed with all their hearts. They jostled each other in the refreshment hall; enough could hardly be provided, and Father Zimmer, who had been permitted to furnish all these good things, could boast of having made that night worth his while. Along the whole length of the outer staircase, you could see people who had partaken too freely of the liquid refreshments, and who now came stumbling out. Out-of-doors, the snow was falling steadily.

Uncle Toby had given me his latch-key, so that I might go home when I wished. I had not missed a single waltz up to two o'clock, but then I had enough. Besides, I was beginning to feel the effects of all the good beverages. Once out in the street, I felt better, and debated with myself whether I should go back, or home and to bed. I should have enjoyed another dance, but I was sleepy. So I decided to go home, and started for the Rue Saint Sylvestre. I helped myself along by the wall, turning over many matters in my mind.

I had been proceeding in this way for about ten minutes, and was about to turn the corner by the fountain, when, raising my nose by chance, I saw on the ramparts behind the trees a moon, red as coal, that was coming through the air. Though it was still millions of miles away, it was going so fast that it was bound to reach us within a quarter of an hour. The sight upset me utterly; the hair of my head stood on end, and I said to myself: "It's the comet! Zacharias Piper was right!" And, hardly knowing what I was about, I started back to the mayoralty at a run. I rushed up the staircase, overturned those who were coming down, and cried in a terrified voice: "The comet! The comet!"

The ball was just at its height. The big drum was thundering away, the boys were stamping their feet, kicking up their legs, when they turned—the girls were red as poppies.

But, when they heard the voice in the hall, "The comet! The comet!" a sudden silence invaded the place, and the people, looking about, saw each other pale, with drawn cheeks and sharp noses.

Sergeant Duchêne darted to the door, stopped me, and put his hand over my mouth, saying: "Are you mad? Will you hold your tongue?" But I threw myself back, and continued to repeat in a voice of despair, "The comet!"

Footsteps were already thumping down the stairs; people rushed out; the women groaned; the tumult was frightful. Some old women, put off their guard by Shrove Tuesday, raised their hands to Heaven, and stammered out, "Jesus, Maria, Joseph!"

In a few seconds the hall was empty. Duchêne left me leaning quite exhausted against a window-sill. I looked out at the people running up the street, and I was nearly crazy with fright. Passing through the refreshment room, I saw the sutler, Catherine Lagoutte, and Corporal Bouquet finishing off the last of a bowl of punch.

"Since all is to end," they said, "let it end well!" Below on the staircase many sat and confessed to each other. One said, "I have practised usury!" Another, "I have used false weights!" Another, "I have cheated at cards!" They all talked at once, except now and then when they stopped short, and cried out together, "Lord, have mercy on us!" I recognised Fèvre, the old baker, and Mme. Lauritz. They

were beating their breasts like miserable sinners. But these things did not interest me, who had sins of my own to account for.

Soon I reached some who were running toward the fountain. You should have heard their groans. All recognised the comet, and I saw that it had doubled in size.

The crowd stood in the dark, and wailed:

"It is all over! Oh, Lord, it is all over, and we are lost!"

And the women invoked St. Joseph, and St. Christopher, and St. Nicholas—in short, all the saints in the calendar.

At this moment, I passed in review all the sins I had committed since coming to years of discretion, and I felt horrified at myself. I grew cold under my tongue, thinking that we were all going to be burned up, and, as the old beggar Balthazar was standing near me, leaning on his crutch, I embraced him, saying,

"Balthazar, when you rest in Abraham's bosom, you will take pity on me, won't you?"

Then he replied, sobbing:

"I am a great sinner, Monsieur Christian. These thirty years I have deceived the community from my love of idleness; for I am not nearly so lame as I seem."

"And I, Balthazar," lamented I, "I am the greatest sinner in Hunebourg!"

We wept on each other's necks.

You see, that is how people will be at the judgment; kings with boot-blacks, good citizens

with barefoot ragamuffins. They will no longer be ashamed of one another, but call one another brothers; and, because fire purifies everything, the newly shaven will not shrink from embracing the stubble-bearded, for the fear of being burned makes your heart tender. Oh, if there were no hell, we should not see so many good Christians! That is the best part of our holy religion.

At last, when we had all been on our knees for a quarter of an hour, Sergeant Duchêne arrived all out of breath. He had run first to the arsenal, and, seeing nothing there, had come back by the Rue des Capucins.

"Well," said he, "what have you been making such a fuss about?" Then, perceiving the comet: "The devil! What is that?"

"It's the end of the world, sergeant," said Balthazar.

"The end of the world?"

"Yes; the comet!"

Then he began to swear like the devil, and exclaimed, "Now, if the adjutant were here, they might know the countersign!"

Then, all at once, drawing his sword and marching along the wall, he cried: "Forward! I don't care what it is! It must be investigated!"

Every one admired his courage, and, inspired by his example, I followed him. We went gently, ever so gently, staring at the comet, which became plainer every second, seemingly moving at the rate of thousands of miles an

hour. Finally, we came to the corner of the old Capuchin convent. The comet seemed to be rising; and the farther we advanced, the higher it rose. We had to raise our heads, so that, at last, Duchêne's neck was almost broken with gazing into the air. Twenty paces farther, I saw the comet, a little to one side. I questioned the prudence of advancing, when the sergeant stopped: "I'll be d——d," muttered he; "it's the reflector."

"The reflector," said I, coming up; "is it possible?" And I looked very much astonished.

It was really the old reflector of the Capuchin convent. Since the Capuchins had gone in 1798, it had never been lighted, and at Hunebourg every one went to bed with the chickens. But the nightwatchman, Burrhus, foreseeing that a good many people would be drunk that night, had charitably put a candle into it, to prevent them from rolling into the ditch that runs around the old cloister; and then he had gone home to the wife of his bosom.

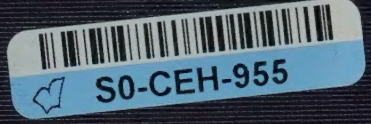
We distinguished the parts of the lantern very well. The wick was as big as your thumb, and, when the wind blew a little, the wick would flare up and flash, and that is why it moved like a comet. Seeing this, I was going to call out to the others, when the sergeant said to me: "Will you be quiet! They would make fun of us, if they knew we had charged on a lantern. Attention!"

He unhooked the rusty chain, and, with a

tremendous crash, down came the reflector. Then we both ran away. The others waited a long time. But, finding the comet extinguished, they took heart, and went to bed.

Next day, the report spread that the prayers of Maria Finck had moved the comet to put itself out; so, since that day, she has been regarded as a holier saint than ever.

Such things happen occasionally in the good little town of Hunebourg.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